The Trika Śaivism of Kashmir

Moti Lal Pandit

The importance of Kashmir Śaivism lies in the fact that an independent school of Śaivism, with its own specific ethos and orientation, emerged from the soil of Kashmir during the eighth century of our era, which till the end of twelfth century made great strides both philosophically and theologically. The type of Śaivism that emerged during the eighth century is deeply rooted in the religious outlook of Tantrism. It is the Tāntric religious outlook which has served as the substratum for the flowering of various schools of Śaivism, and which ultimately terminated in the rise of such philosophical schools as the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā.

The author of the book has made every attempt at explaining as comprehensively as possible the complex theoretical thinking of the Trika. The Trika, although non-dualistic in orientation, does not obliterate the existence of the person, and that is why it accepts Reality as being of the nature of I-consciousness. According to Trika, Reality is both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, and so the world we live in is an actual manifest condition of the Absolute. Also its theology of divine *kenosis* discloses that God is not far away from us, but as light of consciousness constitutes our essential nature.

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Moti Lal Pandit, being a Kashmiri Pandit, had the opportunity of studying the philosophical and Tāntric traditions of Trika from various teachers both in and outside the Valley. Trained as a theologian and in modern humanities and classical languages, he has accordingly been the communicator of today's Hinduism and Buddhism when they encounter the modern world. His many books include: *Towards Transcendence; Being as Becoming; Transcendence and Negation: A Study of Buddhist Compassion and Christian Love; Beyond the Word; Śūnyatā, The Essence of Mahāyāna Spirituality; In Search of the Absolute;* and *The Hidden Way: A Study in Modern Religious Esoterism.*

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Moti Lal Pandit

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Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

ISBN 81-215-1082-1
First published 2003

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Typeset, printed and published by
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
Post Box 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055.

To

Knud Jorgensen

on his sixtieth birthday

as a token of love

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Preface

The Trika Śaivism of Kashmir, whose philosophic content and orientation is characterized by non-dualistic mode of thinking, has its basic source in such primary revelatory texts that are known as the Āgamas or Tantras. The entire Tāntric tradition, whether philosophic or theological, is basically esoteric in that it, that is the Tāntric tradition, shares its soteric knowledge only with those who have been initiated by a competent teacher (*guru*). In addition to its esoteric veneer, the tradition of Kashmir Śaivism has also been given different nomenclatures such as *trika-śāsana* or *rahasya-sampradāya*. The former appellation denotes that the tradition has constructed its philosophical as well as theological superstructure on the basis of principles that are triadic, whereas the latter appellation denotes the esoteric spirit of the tradition. We may, thus, say that the Trika Śaivism contains within itself a definite system of thought as well as such a religious discipline that is esoteric and hidden.

LITERARY SOURCES

The entirety of Trika literature, both canonical and non-canonical, has been classified into the Āgamic, Spanda, and the Pratyabhijñā literatures. For the Trika adherents the Āgamic literature, on account of its revelatory character, is being treated as belonging to the supernatural realm, which means that it is free from such deficiencies and defects from which the worldly literature suffers. The worldly literature has its source in the human mind, and must necessarily carry imprints of the human mind, which is but the product of *prakṛti*. The Āgamic literature, on the contrary, is of divine nature, and so is free from all such empirical defects that is the mark of worldly literature. It is for this reason that the Āgamic literature is considered as a fit vehicle or means for gaining access to the soteric goal, which is nothing else than to gain liberation from the saṁsāric bondage of becoming. The important Āgamic texts that are given the status of revelation are the *Mālinīvijaya*, *Svacchanda*, *Vijñānabhairava, Mṛgendra, Netra*, etc. Most of these texts, on account of the vageries of time and history, have been lost. These Āgamic texts, in one form or the other, express non-dualistic ideas, although not in a systematic way, concerning the Absolute, or what in religious terms is called God. These texts also expound and explain such basic religious methods which enable the adept to reach his soteric goal of liberation.

This revelatory thought of the Āgamic texts remained for a long period of time scattered and in a state of diffusion. The first attempt that was made at integrating the diffused thought of the Agamas was that of Vasugupta. Vasugupta, while composing the text of the *Śivasūtra*, largely succeeded in his mission, and accordingly this text has been accorded the status of revelation. Concerning the actual authorship of the *Śivasūtra*, there are various shades of opinion among the traditional scholars of Kashmir. Some of them hold the view that Vasugupta was just a compiler of the text, whereas the actual author of the text is considered to be Śiva himself. It is said that Śiva revealed the entire text of the *Śivasūtra* in a dream to Vasugupta. Some among these scholars hold the view that Śiva informed Vasugupta in a dream that the entire text is inscribed on a rock in the Mahādeva mountain. There is a third school of opinion which thinks that the text was transmitted to Vasugupta by some Siddhas. Whatever be the case concerning the authorship of the *Śivasūtra*, the fact remains that the name of Vasugupta, in one way or the other, is associated with the text. From a historical point of view, it is Vasugupta who is viewed as being responsible in having transmitted the text to those who followed him.

The text of the *Śivasūtra*, being the foundational text of Trika Śaivism, is held in high esteem, and for this reason many outstanding commentaries have been composed on it. The following are the commentaries that have been written over it:

1. The *Vṛtti* of an unknown author.
2. The *Vārttika* of Bhāskarācārya.
3. The *Vimarśinī* of Kṣemarāja.
4. The *Vārttikam* of Varadarāja.

Upon having solidified and integrated the diffused religious thought of the Tantras by Vasugupta in his foundational text, namely, the *Śivasūtra*, there arose simultaneously a need for such reflection that would delineate the Tāntric conception of Reality in a language or thought-form that is more philosophic than merely religious. This gap between philosophical reflection and religious faith was filled up by Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa in his *magnum opus*, namely, the *Spandakārikā*. The text is so named because it gave rise to a definite school of thought, namely, the Spanda school, which interprets Reality as being of the nature of Spanda (vibration). As to whether Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa is the real author of the text or not is a bone of contention among scholars. As the disciple of Vasugupta, Kallaṭa is supposed just to have compiled the notes of his teacher. The other view thinks Kallaṭa as the real author of the *Spandakārikā*. This assertion is based upon the contention that the thought structure of the *Spandakārikā* is quite different from the one that one finds in the *Śivasūtra*. Moreover, the technical terms that one finds in the *Spandakārikā* are not to be found in the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta, and also this text initiates a new and fresh hermeneutics concerning the nature of Reality. Were we to accept Vasugupta as the author of this text, then there should have been some kind of correspondence, insofar as philosophical reflection is concerned, between the two texts. Whosoever may be the author of the *Spandakārikā*, the fact remains that this text initiated a new philosophical programme, and thereby gave birth to a new school of thought. For the Trika Śaivites the text of the *Spandakārikā* is as important and unique as is the *Śivasūtra*. The importance of the text is reflected by the number of commentaries that have been composed on it. The commentaries on this text that have come down to us are the following:

1. The *Pradīpikā* of Utpala Vaiṣṇava.
2. The *Vivṛti* of Rājānaka Rāma.
3. The *Spandasandoha* of Kṣemarāja. It is a commentary on the first *kārikā* of the text.
4. The *Spandanirṇaya* of Kṣemarāja.

Finally, we have the third literary source concerning the Trika, and this source is completely philosophical in intent and content. The nomenclature that is given to this literature is that of Pratyabhijñā, or the School (*vāda*) of Recognition. It is a philosophical school which attempts, through philosophical reflection and logical reasoning, to assist the seeker as to how to *rcognize* that his essential nature is non-different from that of Paramaśiva. It was Somānanda who, through his *Śivadṛṣṭi*, gave birth to this new philosophical school of thought. As the direct disciple of Vasugupta, who lived in the ninth century, so Somānanda too must have lived in the ninth century. The philosophical text of Somānanda, namely, *Śivadṛṣṭi*, has come down to us partially. Somānanda also is said to have written a commentary, called *Vṛtti*, on the *Śivadṛṣṭi*, which, on account of historical upheavals, has been lost.

In addition to the *Śivadṛṣṭi* of Somānanda, there are other important works on the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, and one of them is the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* of Utpaladeva, who must not be confused with Bhagvadutpala, also known as Utpala Vaiṣṇava, the author of the *Pradīpikā* commentary on the *Spandakārikā*. Utpaladeva, the author of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*, is the disciple of Somānanda, the author of the *Śivadṛṣṭi*. The *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* of Utpaladeva, with the passage of time, gained such importance among the Trika thinkers that many outstanding commentaries have been written on it, and some of them are:

1. The *Vṛtti* of Utpala himself. The text of the *Vṛtti* is partially available.
2. The *Pratyabhijñāvimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta.
3. The *Pratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* of Abhinava. It is a commentary on the lost *Vṛtti* of Utpaladeva.

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

The philosophical reflection concerning the nature of Reality has its source in the theological ideas and concepts that one finds scattered in the various Āgamic texts, which ultimately were integrated into a single unit by Vasugupta in his *Śivasūtra*. Also the *Spandakārikā* has provided the necessary conceptual framework for the Pratyabhijñā thinkers in the development of their philosophy of *recognition*. It is within this broad philosophical and theological framework within which the philosophy of *recognition* came into being.

The non-dualism (*parādvaya*) of Trika is quite different and distinct from the one which Śaṁkara initiated. For the Trika the Absolute (Paramaśiva), although non-relational in terms of its absoluteness, does not simply rest in the tranquillity of its transcendent peace, but as God is actively engaged in the world, and this engagement is not a fictitious or illusory projection of the mind, but is actual and real. Unlike Advaita Vedānta, Trika does not offer us an impersonal Absolute who not only is remote, but also is abstract and unconcerned insofar as life in the world is concerned. The Absolute of Advaita is simply transcendent, and so abides in its own-being, and thereby reflects the silence of the grave where no stir or throb of life exists. The Absolute of Trika, however, is both transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*) as well as immanent (*viśvamaya*), which means that there is no gap between the Uncreate and the create.

The absolutistic philosophy that the Trika has initiated is theistic in orientation, in that its Absolute is not as bloodless and lifeless (*śānta*) as is the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. The interpretation of theism that the Trika has offered concerning God differs radically from the Semitic forms of theism. The God of Semitic theism is so remote and transcendent that the gap between the Uncreate God and the create is unbridgeable. Moreover, the transcendence of God almost verges upon what may be called the terror of the Divine. Instead of divine terror, the Trika offers an interpretation of God in terms of *kenosis*, that is, God, as it were, emptying himself of his divinity by becoming, for all practical purposes, the very limited individual which we all of us are. In assuming the role of a limited being, God thereby destroys his own divine nature. This interpretation of God for the Trika has become possible because it believes God to be inherently creative. That which is creative is always under the pressure of creative urge to spill out its creativity into the open. Since God for the Trika is creative, it means that the creativity within the divine womb of Reality swells up to the point where there is no possibility of avoiding its spilling out. This creative urge of God ultimately reflects itself when this entire universe is emitted out from the Divine Womb of the Goddess, which denotes the creative urge of the Absolute. The absolutistic theism of the Trika, thus, differs radically from the monism of Śaṁkara as well from Semitic forms of theism.

The Absolute of the Trika is One, and so there is no "other" with whom relationship can be established. Neither is the Absolute totally "other", because there is no "other" for whom the Absolute could be other. The other exists where there exist both the subject and the object. It is the subject-object duality that constitutes the diversity of the phenomenal. The Absolute, however, is non-phenomenal, and so is free form the phenomenal diversity. The Absolute becomes diverse the moment it dissolves itself into phenomenal becoming. It means that the Absolute practically becomes the world of which we are a part and which we, as limited individuals, experience out there. This process of manifestation of the Absolute as the world is linked to the opening of eyelids (*unmeṣa*) or to the blooming of a flower (*vikāsa*).

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While becoming the universe, and thus destroying self-divinity, Paramaśiva thereby does not suffer from any change or modification within itself. As the One, it always remains indivisible. This self-projection of the Absolute as the universe may be linked to the reflection in a mirror. The world is nothing but the reflection in the mirror, and so it means that the reflected reflection has no power of destroying the unity of the reflected. In this manner is argued the case by the Trika thinkers concerning the indivisibility and unity of Paramaśiva.

The Absolute is said to be of the nature of pure consciousness (*cit, parāsaṁvit*). As the nature of consciousness is to reveal, so the Absolute as consciousness manifests itself as the manifestable in the universe. That which is manifest denotes that it is identical with knowledge. Thus consciousness and knowledge are said to be identical, which means that the Absolute is knowledge (*jñāna*) itself. Knowledge, however, is knowledge if it is known by someone. It is really the knowability that transforms knowledge into knowledge. If knowledge is not known, then it is not knowledge at all. A knowledge that is not known may be linked to the darkness of non-knowledge that prevails when the knowable remains unknown. To avoid such-like philosophical pitfalls, the Trika thinkers have conceived of the Absolute not only as luminous (*prakāśa*), but also as self-reflecting awareness (*vimarśa*). It is the power of reflection or awareness that really transforms the luminosity or the revealing aspect of consciousness into knowledge. The Trika conception of the Absolute as consciousness, thus, differs radically from that of Advaita Vedānta, in that the latter thinks of consciousness as being a mere passive witness (*sākṣī*), whereas for the former consciousness is dynamic and self-reflective awareness. It is because of the power of reflection that consciousness, by reflecting upon itself, knows itself.

The Absolute as consciousness is one, indivisible, and whole, which means that it is free from phenomenal dualities. The Absolute, thus, is free from the empirical or logical distinctions of *I* and *thou, this* and *that, subject* and *object*. If the Absolute is said to be totally free from subject-object distinctions, then how can we identify the Absolute as consciousness with knowledge? As we have pointed out already, knowledge is not possible unless there is a knower and knowable, which entails subject-object duality. The Trika philosophy overcomes this objection by saying that the Absolute is Absolute precisely because it has the power to survey itself, which, within the Pratyabhijñā framework, means that the Absolute is both the revealing light (*prakāśa*) and the self-reflecting awareness (*vimarśa*). As the nature of light is to reveal, and thereby facilitate the passage for knowledge to emerge, so nothing can be known apart from the revealing light of consciousness. This revealing light of consciousness, however, terminates in knowledge when we have the knowing subject as I. The Trika philosophy, thus, speaks of the Absolute as I-consciousness. It is as I-consciousness that the Absolute is termed as self-reflecting awareness (*vimarśa*). It is the power of reflection which enables the I-consciousness as revealing light to terminate in knowledge. Self-reflecting awareness, therefore, represents the dynamic aspect of consciousness. Were consciousness to be destitute of self-awareness, it would be like the lifeless light of a diamond, which has no power to know itself. But the case with consciousness is not so. Consciousness is both light and self-reflecting awareness.

As the Absolute is I-consciousness and awareness, so it means that it is not destitute of knowledge. There is no possibility for knowledge to arise unless there is the subject who wills to have knowledge. It is the power of will (*icchā-śakti*) that enables the subject to actualize the possibility of knowledge into concrete knowledge. It is because of this fact that the Absolute is said to be in possession of the power of will. When translated into actuality, the power of will denotes absolute freedom (*svātantrya*). To the extent the subject is able to execute his will, to that extent his freedom can be measured. The Absolute, in contrast to individual beings, is absolutely free, and so its freedom is equated to absolute sovereignty. The Absolute's freedom is sovereign, which means that no impediments exist for the Absolute in the way of execution of will. While executing will, one has to act. Unless one acts, there is no possibility for will to be actualized. It means that the emergence of knowledge (*jñāna*) is actualized when will (*icchā*) is acted upon. Accordingly will, knowledge and action (*kriyā*) are said to be the three absolute powers of the Absolute, and together they also reflect its sovereignty. At the individual or microcosmic level, these three powers are made use of in terms of phenomenal limitations. This metaphysical framework of the Trika tells us that the Absolute is not only consciousness (*cit*), but also supreme power (*anuttara*). It is as light and self-reflecting awareness, as consciousness and supreme power, that the Absolute is said to be both transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*) and immanent (*viśvamaya*).

The Absolute as consciousness and supreme power is identical with absolute freedom. The sovereign freedom of the Absolute is reflected in and through the absolute powers it has. It is not possible for one to make use of one's freedom unless endowed with such powers that enable one to make use of freedom. Freedom apart from powers does not exist. Since the Absolute is identical with sovereign freedom, so its powers also have to be of absolute nature. Although having infinite powers, the Trika thinkers think that there are certain basic powers (*śakti*) that define absolute freedom of the Absolute. The defining powers of the Absolute are said to be five, which, as its were, establish its sovereignty. They first two may not be treated as powers of the Absolute. The, rather, disclose the own-being (*svarūpa*) of the Absolute. The five powers are:

1. *Cit* or Consciousness. The nature of the Absolute, according to the

Trika, is but consciousness. Consciousness is said to have two aspects: the luminous (*prakāśa*) aspect, and the aspect of self-reflecting awareness (*vimarśa*). The function of the former aspect is to reveal, whereas that of the latter is to transform this revelation into knowledge through the process of self-reflection. This power of self-reflection is linked to Śakti, which represents the divine dynamism of the Absolute.

2. *Ānanda* or Bliss. The Absolute is not simply consciousness, but also bliss, which means that the Absolute is both consciousness and power. The bliss aspect of the Absolute represents its Śakti, and thereby also embodies its absolute sovereignty (*svātantrya*). These two aspects, *cit* and *ānanda*, represent the nature (*svarūpa*) of the Absolute.

3. *Icchā* or Will. Since *cit* and *ānanda* represent Śiva and Śakti categories (*tattva*) of pure creation, so the power of will (*icchā-śakti*) corresponds to the Sadāśiva, or Eternal Śiva, manifestational category of pure creation (*śuddhādhvā*).

4. *Jñāna* or Knowledge. The Absolute brings into operation the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*) when it manifests itself as *Īśvara* manifestational category of pure creation.

5. *Kriyā* or Action. The power of action (*kriyā-śakti*) is equated to the manifestational category of pure creation which is known either as Sadvidyā or Śuddhavidyā.

THE EMISSIONAL PROCESS OF MANIFESTATIONAL CATEGORIES

The Trika philosophy concerning the cosmogensis does not follow the line of thought which most of the theistic religions do. The theistic religions, particularly of Semitic variety, think that God, as causeless Cause, has created this entire cosmos, including the world we live in, out of nothing, that is, *ex nihilo*. This doctrine of creation gives rise to a host a problems. One of them is that it is unthinkable that something concrete can be created out of nothing. The *nothing*, philosophically speaking, denotes non-existence, and that which is non-existent cannot give rise to something that is concrete. This doctrine of creation, therefore, is not acceptable to the Trika thinkers.

The Trika doctrine of cosmogensis is more a theory of evolution than of creation. While accepting the broad outline of Sāṁkhya concerning the evolution of the universe, Trika thinkers however have adopted a specific line of thought, which tells us that the universe is nothing but the emission (*visarga*) or extension (*prasāra*) of Paramaśiva himself. The Absolute, thus, is seen both as the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) as well as the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) of the universe. In other words, it is Paramaśiva himself who evolves himself into what may be called the categories-of-existence (*tattva*). This evolution of Paramaśiva into the universe is in terms of descent. This cosmogensis of the Trika is a full-fledged doctrine of *kenosis*, that is, God emptying himself, and thereby destroying himself, by becoming the finite. What it amounts to saying is this: the Infinite, while incarnating itself as the finite, reduces itself to the condition of finitude.

For the Sāṁkhya *prakṛti* or the material stuff evolves itself into twenty-four evolutes or categories. The Trika, however, believes in thirty-seven categories. The real evolutes are only thirty-six, whereas the thirty-seventh category is but Paramaśiva. Paramaśiva, through the process of *kenosis* or descent, not only evolves itself into the manifestable categories of existence, but also initiates, through the process of dissolution (*laya*) or withdrawal (*saṁkoca*), the involution of the universe, which means that the universe is reduced to the unmanifest condition (*avyakta*) that existed prior to its manifestation. For the Trika involution of the universe denotes that Paramaśiva withdraws all that is manifest into himself, and this movement is technically linked to the closing of the eyelids (*nimeṣa*) or to contraction (*saṁkoca*). In contrast to the movement of withdrawal, we have that of evolution, which is linked to the opening of eyelids (*unmeṣa*). These two movements of expansion/evolution and of withdrawal/dissolution characterize, as it were, the creative impulse of Paramaśiva. Dissolution is as much creative as is expansion, because without death we cannot think of life. It is on the basis of destruction that construction is formulated, and in the case of Paramaśiva manifestation of the universe is actualized when he empties himself of his divinity.

The entire process of universal evolution or manifestation has been classified by the Trika thinkers into the order of pure manifestation (*śuddhādhavā*) and the impure manifestation (*aśuddhādhvā*). The pure manifestational order encapsulates into itself what may be termed as pure non-dualism, which means that the consciousness of duality does not operate in this realm. In contrast to pure manifestation, we have the order of impure manifestation, which not only is characterized by the duality of diversity, but also by temporal finitude. The order of this manifestation is completely under the influence of *māyā*, or that power by which the Infinite is made to experience as if it is finite and limited. It is the sense of limitation, of finitude, of bondage, that operates at this level.

The pure order of manifestation consists of five categories. At this level of manifestation limiting powers of *māyā* do not operate. As no sense of I (*ahaṁ*) and this (*idaṁ*) exist at this level, so it has been termed as being pure (*śuddha*). While evolving himself into pure evolutes, Paramaśiva in himself does not undergo any change or modification, as is the case with milk while evolving (*pariṇāma*) itself into curd. This theory of evolution tells us that when, for example, A evolves or transforms itself into B, A thereby loses its state of existence that existed prior to its becoming B. This empirical law of evolution, contends the Trikites, does not apply to Paramaśiva because he transcends all forms of causality. What may seem to us the destruction of Paramaśiva is, according to Trika, apparent and not real. This *kenosis* of Paramaśiva into the manifestational evolutes may be linked to the reflection in a mirror, or to the projection or ejection of an idea from the mind. In this manner is maintained the non-dual unity of the Absolute as well as the apparent character of the manifest.

While evolving himself into the pure order of manifestation, Paramaśiva thereby gives rise to the five pure categories, which are the category of Śiva, of Śakti, of Sadāśiva, of Īśvara and of Śuddhavidyā or Sadvidyā.

1. Upon initiating the process of universal manifestation, Paramaśiva thereby gives rise to the first category (*tattva*), which is that of Śiva. Śiva, thus, is seen as representing the initial movement (*prathama-spanda*) of Paramaśiva towards manifestation in terms of which the entire cosmic order is actualized.

2. The second manifestational category of Paramaśiva concerning the pure order of manifestation is that of Śakti. It is the very nature of Śakti as power to initiate creative movement within the Absolute towards the emergence of "I" (*aham*) and "this" (*idam*), which means that a kind of stir or tendency is initiated within the heart of Paramaśiva towards the bifurcation of subject and object. There is no possibility for manifestation to occur unless the subject-object diversity, which is the nature of phenomenality, is initiated. It will be a mistake to think of Śakti as being distinct or separate from Paramaśiva. Śakti, rather, is the very nature of Paramaśiva as God. It is the aspect of Śakti of Paramaśiva that represents really the creative urge within the womb of the Absolute. Rightly, therefore, has it been said that Śakti denotes the intendedness to create (*unmukhtā*) of Paramaśiva.

3. The third category is that of Sadāśiva or Sādhākhya. At this level of pure order the tendency towards the "this" aspect of manifestation is somewhat strengthened. The strengthening of the "this" is dependent

upon the affirmation of Paramaśiva's will (*icchā*). This affirmation of the "this" terminates in the experience of *I am this*. The experience of the "this", however, is not as clear as one would like to have. It is still hazy (*asphuṭa*).

4. The fourth manifestational category is that of Īśvara or Aiśvara. At this level the experience of the "this" is much more clear and sharp. It is at this level from where begins the flowing forth of the process of universal manifestation (*unmeṣa*). As the power of knowledge (*jñāna*) is predominant at this level, so the objectification of manifestation also begins to be solidified. It is so because knowledge is not possible apart from the object, which is a knowable, and as such has to be known. Naturally the experience of this level has to be in terms of *I am this*.

5. Finally, we have the manifestation of the category of Śuddhavidyā or Sadvidyā. The experience of this level with regard to the *I* and the *this* is even and balanced. The evenness of experience may be compared to the two pans of a balance. As it is the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*) that is dominant at this level, so the tendency evidently is towards the polarization of subject and object. Although the polarization of subject and object, of *I* and *this*, may not be actual, yet the distinction between the two is affirmed. As the experience of this level is neither of complete unity nor of total separation between the *I* and the *this*, so the experience that eventuates is said to be of the nature of unity-in-diversity (*bhedābheda*). It is an experience that represents an intermediate condition (*parāpara daśā*) between unity and duality, between non-dualism and dualism. Whatever experience one may have at the pure level of manfestation, it is always of an ideal kind, that is, experience is always in terms of an idea.

THE ORDER OF IMPURE MANIFESTATION

Upon completing the order of pure manifestation by giving rise to the first five categories, there then begins the operation of *māyā*, which results in the emergence of impure order of manifestation, which means the emission of such categories that constitute the entire spectrum of phenomenality. The first operation of *māyā* is to veil or conceal (*āvaraṇa*) the divine nature of the Absolute by giving rise to the sense of separation between the Infinite and the finite. This veiling process of the divine is accomplished by *māyā* by putting into operation her powers of concealment (*kañcuka*). On account of the concealment of the Divine the individual being experiences himself as being limited and finite. It is the terror of finitude that haunts him always and everywhere. This sense of limitation is experienced in terms of the *I* being distinct and separate from the *this*. These veiling powers of *māyā* are said to be five, and they are:

1. *Kalā* is that limiting power (*kañcuka*) of *māyā* by which an individual experiences limitation in respect to action (*kriyā*). This experience of limitation concerning action denotes the curtailment of freedom, and thereby of will.

2. The second limiting factor is called *vidyā*. The function of this veiling power is to reduce omniscience (*sarvajñatva*) to a form of knowing that is bound, limited and is dependent upon the subject-object duality. It is this knowledge of which the *Śivasūtra* speaks of as the source of bondage.

3. The third limiting power is that of attachment (*rāga*). This veiling power gives rise to a sense of unfulfilled desire, of incompleteness. The very emergence of desire denotes the experience of *lack* within. It is the sense of lack that gives rise to such desires in terms of which one expects to fulfil what one lacks. However, the experience of lack as absence always remains, and so the host of unfulfilled desires haunt the individual. It is the fear of loss of what one has that gives rise to the desire of attachment. Also attachment denotes that the fullness (*pūrṇatva*) of Universal Consciousness is reduced to a desire for particulars. All this boils down to the fact that attachment for particulars embodies the destitution of fullness.

4. The fourth limiting power is known as time or *kāla*. It is the limiting factor of temporality that is responsible in giving birth to the terror of finitude, which, in the form of death, denotes the absence of that that *is*. This terror of finitude is experienced in terms of impermanence, and accordingly eternity as time is experienced as past, present and future.

5. The last limiting factor is that of *niyati*, or what may be called the law of restriction. It is on account of this veiling power of *māyā* that the Universal Consciousness experiences itself as being limited in every sense of the word. It means that the absolute freedom (*svatantratā*) and all-pervasiveness (*vyāpakatva*) of the Universal Consiousness are reduced to such forms of experience which would terminate in the experience of limitation in respect to causality, time, space and form.

THE MANIFESTATIONAL CATEGORIES OF PURUṢA AND PRAKṚTI

Once the five limiting factors (*pañca-kañcuka*) of *māyā* have completed their respective operations, there then begins to emerge what may be called the objective manifestation. The objective categories of existence of impure order correspond to the twenty-four Sāṁkhya categories. These twenty-four categories are not the invention of the Trika, but have been borrowed wholesale from the Sāṁkhya. It is the Sāṁkhya dyad of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, of spirit and matter, that are seen responsible in giving rise to evolutes of objective manifestation. From a Tāntric point of view, this Sāṁkhya dyad of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* corresponds to the Divine Couple, namely, Śiva and Śakti. It is the commingling of the Couple that fructifies the seed of manifestation that is ejected at the time of co-penetration. In whatever way the symbolism of the Divine Couple, or the Sāṁkhya idea of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, is interpreted, the fact of the matter is that no possibility of manifestation exists unless the opposite sexes or principles co-mingle. It is this dialectic of opposites which, upon coming together, give rise to a new synthesis. It is this very principle of dialectic which the Sāṁkhya as well as all the Tāntric traditions have made use of in explaining as to how the process of objective manifestation has been initiated as well as actualized.

Although the twenty-four categories of objective manifestation may have been borrowed from the Sāṁkhya, yet the fact remains that the Trika interpretation of them is its own. Thus the Trika notion of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is not the same which one finds in the Sāṁkhya. For the Sāṁkhya there is one *prakṛti* for all the monads (*puruṣa*), whereas the Trika believes that each *puruṣa* has a different *prakṛti*. Both the Sāṁkhya and Trika, however, think of *prakṛti* as being the womb of objective manifestation. *Prakṛti* for the Trika is not a mere material stuff, but is equated to the Mother Goddess as Śakti. Thus, as the Mother Earth is the source of all that that sustain life, so the Mother Goddess as *prakṛti* is the source of objective manifestation.

Upon the manifestation of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, there occurs differentiation in terms of which new phenomenal categories are given rise to. Before explaining as to what these categories are, let us, at this juncture, explain the three strands which the Sāṁkhya thinks to be the constituents of *prakṛti*, and which Trika accepts wholesale. The three constituents (*guṇa*) are termed as *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, that is, peaceful, passionate and intertial. When these three constituents are in perfect balance, there, then, is no disturbance within the womb of *prakṛti*, and therefore no manifestational emission of categories takes place. It is when one of the constituents dominates the other two, there occurs disturbance (*kṣobha*) within *prakṛti*, and on account of this agitation the manifestational categories begin to be emitted out of the womb of *prakṛti*, which, within the Tāntric framework, means that the manifestational seed is being emitted out from the Womb of the Goddess.

The interpretation that the Trika has offered concerning the constituents of *prakṛti* is this. While *prakṛti* is seen to represent the peaceful (*śānta*) power of Śiva, the three constituents are termed as representing within Śiva the tendency towards polarization of his powers of will, knowledge and action. In this way the Trika tries to overcome the dualism that Sāṁkhya inserts between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. For the Trika *prakṛti* as the Śakti of Śiva denotes that they are identical, and not two separate or dissimilar entities. It is how the Trika establishes its non-dualistic view of Reality.

MANIFESTATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CATEGORIES

Upon the actualization of categories of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, there occurs further differentiation in terms of which the emergence of the categories of psychic apparatus (*antaḥkaraṇa*), of the power of senses (*indriya*), and of the elemental matter (*bhūta*) is facilitated. The psychic apparatus is an internal instrument, and consists of intelligence (*buddhi*), I-maker (*ahaṁkāra*), and of mind (*manas*). All the three together are called the psychic apparatus. The function of intelligence is to ascertain or discriminate (*vyavasāyātmikā*), and accordingly emerges knowledge in terms of understanding. Insofar as ascertainment of intelligence is concerned, it is of two kinds: internal and external. The internal ascertainment consists of such impressions (*saṁskāra*) in the mind that one inherits from previous lives, whereas the external one consists of in perceiving the objects, through the senses, that are out there. Insofar as the I-maker is concerned, it is seen to be the product of intelligence, and it functions as the principle of self-appropriation. Finally, we have mind. It is said to be the product of the I-maker. While cooperating with the senses, the mind thereby aids the senses in actualizing perceptions. When left to itself, it gives birth to images and concepts.´

Once the categories of internal organ are manifested, there, then, begins the manifestation of the five senses of perception (*jñānendriya*), of the five senses of action (*karmendriya*), and of the five elements of perception (*tanmātra*). The manifestation of the five senses of perception does not mean the manifestation of five sense organs. It means, rather, the manifestation of such powers that enable the respective sense organs to function in accordance with their nature. The same is the case with the senses of action.

The power of the five senses of perception is said to be the product of the I-maker. The experiences that occur through these senses are sensible in nature. The five senses of perception are those of (i) smelling (*ghrāṇendriya*), (ii) of tasting (*rasanendriya*), (iii) of seeing (*cakṣurindriya*), (iv) of feeling by touch (*sparśendriya*), and (v) of hearing (*śrvaṇendriya*).

Next to the five senses of perception come the five senses of action (*karmendriya*). The senses of action, too, are termed as being the product of the I-maker. The categories that belong to this order are (1) speaking (*vāgindriya*), (2) locomotion (*pādendriya*), (3) excreting (*pāyu-indriya*), (4) handling (*hastendriya*), and (5) sexual action *(upasthendriya)*.

Finally, we have the manifestation of the five elements of perception. These, too, are the products of the I-maker. The elements of perception are (a) sound-as-such (*śabda-tanmātra*), (b) touch-as-such (*sparśa-tanmātra*), (c) colour-as-such (*rūpa-tanmātra*), (d) flavour-as-such (*rasa-tanmātra*), and (e) odour-as-such (*gandha-tanmātra*).

With the completion of the categories of the senses of perception and of action as well as of elements of perception, there then is given rise to the five material elements (*mahābhūta*), which are treated as the products of elements of perception. The five gross elements are space (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*agni*), water (*āpa*), and earth (*pṛthvī*). The element space is produced by sound (*śabda*), whereas the element air comes from touch (*sparśa*). The element fire is produced by form (*rūpa*), and the element water comes from taste (*rasa*). Insofar as the element earth is concerned, it is produced by smell (*gandha*).

These thirty-six categories constitute the entire structure of manifestation, which include both the pure and impure orders of manifestation from Śiva to earth. The thirty-seventh category, which is not a manifestational category, is that of Paramaśiva. This entire process of mannifestation is initiated by the inherent creative impulse of Paramaśiva, which is none other than *spanda* or *śakti*, and which, at the religious level, is symbolized by the Mother Goddess. It is Paramaśiva himself who, on account of inherent creative impulse, emits out of himself all the categories of existence. The individual self (*caitanya*) is nothing else but Paramaśiva himself. It is Paramaśiva himself who, as a phenomenal creature, experiences himself as being limited (*aṇu*) or bound. This experience of limitation occurs on account of the physical frame or what is called the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*). The gross body is made operatioal by the life-force (*prāṇa*) within it.

BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

The embodied existent (*jīva*) not only has a gross body, but also has a body that is subtle (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), which also is known as a group of eight (*puryaṣṭaka*), because it consists of the psychic apparatus (*antaḥkaraṇa*), namely, of *buddhi, ahaṁkāra* and *manas*, as well as of the five elements of perception (*tanmātra*). It is further asserted that the body is reduced to insentiency when the life-force departs from it. The biological death of the body, however, must not be construed as being equivalent to annihilation. The self, which is essentially eternal and is identical with Śiva, never dies. Thus is maintained the survival of life after death.

The individual existent, while in the world, gains access to all forms of experiences through the three states of consciousness, which are waking state (*jāgrat*), the state of sleep (*nidrā*), and the state of dream (*svapna*). In the waking state the experiences are relatively real when compared to experiences that are transcendental in nature. Insofar as the state of deep sleep is concerned, the experience one gains in this state is that of release, of peace and stillness. The experiences of the dream state are the projections of the mind. They are real to the extent the dream state lasts. These experiences are, however, negated in and through the waking state. These experiences, thus, are termed as being illusory. In addition to these three normal states of consciousness, there is the Fourth, namely, *turīya* state. This state transcends all the three normal states, and so is equated to the state of pure consciousness and bliss (*cidānanda*). This transcendent state, namely, the Fourth state, is attained at that moment when, through yogic practices, consciousness is completely interiorized. It is upon the interiorization of consciousness that the mind is completely deconditioned from habits that one has inherited from past lives, which means complete destruction of impressions (*saṁskāra*) in the mind. This destruction of impressions results in the attainment of soteric liberation (*mukti*) in terms of which limited individuality is cast off, and thereby is gained the supreme knowledge of identity. The one who reaches this state is called liberated-while-alive (*jīvanmukta*).

The limitations of will, knowledge and action, which the individual experiences, are because of nescience (*avidyā*) and impurities (*mala*). The function of *avidyā* is to superimpose (*upādhi*) the unreal upon the real. This superimposition of the unreal upon the real terminates in a knowledge that is erroneous. On account of this erroneous knowledge the individual does not recognize his essential nature, which gives rise to what is called bondage. Similar is the case with impurities. Impurities are said to be of three kinds: *āṇava-mala, māyīya-mala*, and *kārma-mala*. The function of impurity is to conceal the Real. Insofar as *āṇava-mala* is concerned, it reduces the universality of consciousness to the status of a limited being (*aṇu*). This sense of limitedness comes on account of erroneous knowledge (*avidyā*) concerning one's essential nature (*svabhāva*), which consists of in not recognizing oneself as being non-different from Paramaśiva. Under the impact of nescience, one experiences oneself as being distinct, and consequently the experience of limitedness emerges. Thus *avidyā* and *āṇava-mala* assist each other insofar as the reduction of universal consciousness to the state of an individual existent is concerned. Insofar as the impurity of *māyā* is concerned, it clouds one's understanding, and thereby gives rise to a form of knowledge that is cloudy and hazy, and maybe linked to the knowledge that is gained when the rope is perceived as being snake. This misconceived knowledge comes about due to darkness, and on account of darkness one is unable to perceive the object clearly. Similarly *māyā* functions as a kind of darkness, which clouds the vision of recognition, and thereby the Real remains unknowable. The third impurity is that of *kārma*. The impurity of *kārma* ripens when the latent impressions in the mind are actualized, and the latent impressions (*saṁskāra, vāsanā*) are nothing but the traces of actions performed during previous lives. It is the force of these traces that puts into motion the saṁsāric wheel of rebirth or of bondage.

Since the individual existent experiences himself as being bound and limited, so the Trika system of thought aims at formulating such a philosophical and practical religious framework whereby the sense of bondage is transcended. Insofar as an individual experiences himself as being limited, to that extent he will have to suffer the pangs of rebirth. As the Trika aims at liberating man from the painful experience of rebirth by restoring him to his authentic mode of existence, so this system, for all practical purposes, may be called the soteriological system of thought. It is the conception of soteriology that really has determined the philosophical as well as the practical methodology of the Trika.

For the Trika liberation from bondage means recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one's essential nature, which is said to be pure I-consciousness. Insofar as empirical mode of I-consciousness is concerned, it is always intentional, which means it goes out of itself to the object over there. In relating itself to the object, it gains its knowledge. Similarly empirical consciousness knows or becomes aware of itself only when it objectifies itself to itself. It would, therefore, not be wrong to say that empirical consciousness is relational, which means that a contrast is made between self-consciousness and not-self. Insofar as pure I-consciousness is concerned, there is no contrast in it. It is nothing but immediate awareness. That is why liberation has been spoken of as being nothing else than the awareness of one's essential nature.

The question arises as to how to gain access to this state of pure I-consciousness which corresponds to the state of liberation. For this purpose the Trika has envisaged a scheme of methods by the practice of which the attainment of the state of liberation is assured. The religious discipline or methods (*upāya*) are meant to purify the individual from impurities to the measure that he becomes a fit vessal for the reception of divine grace. All these methods have a yogic orientation, and the methods are the *āṇava-upāya*, *śākta-upāya*, *śāmbhava-upāya*, and *anupāya*. The *āṇava-upāya* or the Individual Way is meant for the beginner. It is purely yogic in orientation. Upon gaining proficiency in this method, the individual automatically steps into the *śākta-upāya* or the Way of Śakti. This method is meant for such Tāntric adepts who have attained to the state of a hero (*vīra*) by discarding the state of animal (*paśu-bhāva*), which is the charecteristic feature of ordinary people. The third method, namely, the *śāmbhava-upāya* or the Way of Śiva, is free from all yogic practices. The goal, according to this method, is reached solely upon the descent of grace (*śaktipāta*) of Śiva. The final method is that of *anupāya*, or the Null Way. This method is considered to be no-method because no physical or mental exertion is involved in it. The goal of self-realization is spontaneous and is the outcome of grace. In this way the Trika has tried to give due importance to both self-dependence and other-dependence, that is, to self-effort and divine grace. It is the proportionate mixture of the two which makes the Trika methods of salvation efficacious and meaningful.

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New Delhi
Jyeṣṭha Aṣṭamī 2002

Chapter 1

Early Religious and Historical Background

The importance of Kashmir Śaivism lies in the fact that an independent school of Śaivism, with its own specific ethos and orientation, emerged from the soil of Kashmir during the eighth century of our era, which till the end of twelfth century AD made great strides both philosophically and theologically. The type of Śaivism that emerged during the eighth century is deeply rooted in the religious outlook of Tāntrism, which must have been taking shape from the beginning of our era. It is the Tāntric religious outlook which served as the substratum or basis for the flowering of various schools of Śaivism, and which ultimately culminated in the composition of such foundational texts as the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta and the *Spandakārikā* of Bhatta Kallaṭa. This Tāntric tradition of Kashmir Śaivism was enriched by a long succession of teachers who, through their philosophical genius, were able to give it a pan-Indian shape and colour. It is within the context of Tāntric revelation that the text of Kashmir Śaivism was composed, and so accordingly adhered to such esoteric norms which esoterism entails. It is the underlying spirit of Tāntric esoterism which resulted in referring to Kashmir Śaivism, from a traditional viewpoint, as the Trika Śāstra, Trika Śāsana, Rahasya Sampradāya, Tryambaka Sampradāya, etc.[1] As to why Kashmir Śaivism is given the appellation of *trika* is because of its acceptance of many trinities, which have both philosophic and esoteric significance. To counterbalance the nomenclature *trika,* the school of Śaivism that emerged in Kashmir is also titled as Half-of-the-Six (*ṣaḍardha-śāstra*). It is within the framework of triadism that the general philosophical and religious outlook of Kashmir Śaivism, or what technically is called Trika Śaivism, has to be followed.

TĀNTRIC BACKGROUND

Before explaining the religious conditions of the people of Kashmir prior to the emergence of Trika Śaivism, it will be of utmost importance if some light is thrown as to what characterizes Tāntric revelation and in what manner it has served as the background for the development, both philosophically and religiously, of what generally is called Kashmir Śaivism. At the outset it needs to be kept in mind that Hinduism is a religion of hierarchies, and each hierarchical level has its own specific revelatory texts and religious practices. It is within this general framework that the Tāntric texts are considered by the adherents of Tantrism as being revelatory on account of them being of divine origin. These Tāntric texts are both extensive and varied. Whatever be their size or variation, they are thought by the *tāntrikas* as being the word of the Supreme Being, and so like the Vedas are thought to be existing eternally. From a historical viewpoint, these texts have emanated from such teachers which are seen as being responsible in establishing a particular line of transmission, which, with the passage of time, took the shape of a sect. Each sect, thus, has its own line of transmission, which ultimately gave rise to specific texts that are considered as being revelatory. What it amounts to saying concerning the origin of Tāntric texts is this: These texts owe their origin to specifice teachers which, through oral transmission, have come down to us and which by the *tāntrikas* are given the attribute of revelation.

If Hinduism is a religion of hierarchies, and each hierarchical level has its own scriptures, does it mean that every Hindu accepts all the scriptural texts as being equally valid and authoritative? In general terms Hinduism considers all religious texts of all religions to be valid insofar as they concern themselves with the methodology of salvation. Even if these texts contain conflicting views, they are interpreted as belonging to the relative realm of thought, which is characterized by a dualism to which dialectical opposition is innate. Whatever knowledge we derive or obtain at the empirical level, it is accomplished either through the method of exclusion or by contrasting one entity or concept with the other. Further Hinduism believes that at the level of spiritual gnosis all forms of empirical contrasts are either negated or are made to submerge in the absolute unity of the whole. When it, however, comes to the question of sectarians' beliefs, a Hindu will generally believe in the ultimate authority of the scriptural texts of his own sect by saying that the texts of other traditions reveal only such truths that are external, whereas the texts of his own tradition contain such truths that are esoteric and ultimate. It is this strategem which the Mahāyānists employed when it came to the validity of their own scriptures. In saying that the Buddha revealed only external truths in the Hīnayāna scriptures, the Mahāyānists thereby came to the conclusion that the scriptures of others, in comparison to their own, may be treated as belonging to a lower category. It is this very hermeneutical principle which the great Kashmiri Śaivites, namely, Abhinavagupta and others, employed in the context of various Tāntric sects which were flourishing in Kashmir. Thus was maintained that the various Tāntric traditions contain partial truths, and so accordingly they are implicitly tending towards the Trika, which contains the whole truth concerning Reality and salvation.[2] It is also possible that a sectarian Hindu may reject all other scriptures except the ones that belong to his own tradition by saying that the scriptures of "lower" category only cause delusion and darkness.

Whatever be the nature of acceptance or non-acceptance of scriptures of various traditions within Hinduism, the fact remains that Hinduism, by and large, may be divided into three broad traditions, which are Vaiṣṇuite, Śaivite and Śākta. It is to these broad three traditions to which every Hindu belongs; he could be a Vaiṣṇuite, a Śaivite or a Śākta. For the Vaiṣṇuite it is Viṣṇu, or any of his incarnations, which is treated as one supreme God, whereas for the Śaivites it is Śiva who represents the supreme Reality. Insofar as the Śāktas are concerned, they conceive of Reality as being represented by the feminine principle, which, at the metaphysical level, is interpreted in terms of a dynamism (*spanda-śakti*) which is said to be the essential nature of Reality. At the popular level of religiosity, this feminine principle as *śakti,* or dynamic power, is said to be none other than the Mother Goddess itself. As the opposite of male principle, which is mainly represented by Viṣṇu for the Vaiṣṇuites and by Śiva for the Śaivites, the feminine principle as the Mother Goddess is depicted as being the spouse either of Viṣṇu or Śiva. For the Śāktas Śiva and Viṣṇu, apart from Śakti, are both powerless and lifeless. Accordingly the Mother Goddess is seen as being both the essential attribute (*dharma*) and essential nature (*svabhāva*) of the male God, whether it be Śiva, Viṣṇu, or any other male deity. It is this dialectical polarisation of Reality into the male and female principles which is constitutive of Tāntric thought. Insofar as this bifurcation within Reality continues to be, to that extent the process of creational emission (*visarga*) or manifestation will continue to be—and this movement of outward projection of Reality is termed as that of expansion (*vikāsa*). Whereas the reverse of this movement, which is that of withdrawal and which also is identified with creational dissolution (*laya* or *saṁhāra*), is, at the soteriological level, referred to as the movement of salvation on account of accomplishing the task of transcending the dialectical duality of Śiva and Śakti.

If Reality is seen as being non-dual, then to speak of Śiva as being the possessor of power (*śakti*), which is none other than the Goddess, would mean that Śakti is different from Śiva. For the Kashmiri Śaivites there is no essential difference between Śiva and Śakti on account of the fact that the latter denotes the essential nature of the former.[3] It is on account of *śakti* that an entity is empowered to give rise to an effect, and on account of effect we come know the specific nature of an entity. In relation to Śiva, we come to know that Śiva is the possessor of diverse powers on account of giving rise to various effects.[4] Even though it may be a quality (*dharma*) which defines the nature of the substance, yet both have to be there together. If it is the attribute, which inheres in the substance, that is seen responsible in defining the nature of the substance, then we are taking up the Vaiśeṣika view which thinks that the substance and its attributes are relational. This understanding of the substance would go against the basic Tāntric view which upholds that Śiva and Śakti are identical and not two different or opposite categories. Upon viewing Reality as being non-dual, the Kashmiri Śaivites reject the relational view of the Vaiśeṣikas concerning the substance and its attributes.[5] There is no distinction between Śiva and his Power, as the former is nothing else than the power he is said to be in possession of. Accordingly writes Maheśvarānanda:

> The single union of all the countless powers variously perceived is the exertion of the Heart of one's own (consciousness), and this is Śiva, the one Who is supremely free.[6]

Although at the transcendental level there may exist no difference between Śiva and Śakti, yet it is real at the level of manifestation. Unless this distinction between the power/attribute and its possessor is made at the empirical level, we cannot comprehend the sameness of Reality, which is its essential nature. Thus *spanda* as *śakti* is seen as the supreme nature of the supreme Lord. At the subjective level, the universal pulsation of consciousness (*sāmānyaspanda*) is seen as innate nature of the self, which, as reflective awareness of consciousness, is non-distinct from one's own essential nature. From this it is concluded that *śakti* is the innate nature of the experiencing subject who, as the agent or doer, is said to be eternal on account of him having the innate attribute of pure cognitive subjectivity, which is continuously visible as well as pervades all the states of consciousness. In this manner is established the Tāntric view of Reality as being one, differenceless and same.

It is by making use of such philosophic sophistication that the Kashmiri Śaivites have interpreted the essential unity between the Śākta view of Reality as being feminine and the Śaivite one, which upholds that Reality is masculine in nature. These broad three traditions of Hinduism, as represented by Vaiṣṇuism, Śaivism, and Śāktism, may, at the philosophical level, be said to be representing a metaphysic of dualism, dualism-cum-non-dualism, and non-dualism. It is to one of the philosophical views to which a particular tradition may subscribe. Thus we have Śaivites who are dualists, non-dualists, and dualist-cum-non-dualists. This principle applies equally to Vaiṣṇuites as well to Śāktas. It is within this broad philosophic framework within which, as we shall see, the Tāntric scriptures have been classified.

The dualists, or the *bhedavādins,* postulate two eternal principles, namely, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti.* It is the Sāṁkhya school which prominently adheres to this view, and at the religious level has influenced such traditions which, more or less, look at Reality as being different from everything that is create or manifest. For Tantrism this dualist view of two co-eternal principles has served as the basis for their view of Reality as consisting of Śiva and Śakti. The basic view of the dualists is that there is the spiritual principle, which is represented by *puruṣa,* and that there is a material principle, which is known as *prakṛti.* The Person is inactive and passive, whereas Nature is active and dynamic. Insofar as the Person is concerned, it is basically the individual self (*jīva*), and there are many selves as there are individual beings. *Prakṛti* or Nature is said to represent that which is objective and outside of consciousness. The Person somehow gets entangled within Nature, and thereby is made to suffer countless rebirths. Upon discriminating between spirit and matter, the Person obtains liberation, which basically denotes that the Person no more remains under the influence of Nature, and thereby is completely freed from the painful cycle of saṁsāric rebirths. It is this dualistic philosophy to which the Yoga of Patañjali adheres to. For the classical system of Yoga a yogī, through the methods of introversion, arrives at a state of consciousness whereby he is enabled to recognize his identity as a Person by completely detaching himself from the restless activities of Nature. Insofar as Śaivism is concerned, it did not escape from the impact of dualism. For the dualist Śaivites, particularly for the Śaivasiddhāntins, there is a trinity of God (*pati*), the world (*pāśa*), and the individual soul (*paśu*). All the three realities are distinct and eternal. The first two realities, however, are sustained by God.

The second stream of Hindu thought is characterized by what may be called qualified dualism (*bhedābheda*). This school of thought adheres to the metaphysical notion that there exists some kind of identity between God, man and the world. The identity, however, is not of such a nature which would abolish their identities, which means that each entity or principle is distinct and separate. This philosophic view is to be found among many Śaivite and Vaiṣṇuite groups. The best exponent of this view is the *Bhagavadgītā.*

Finally, we have the third stream of thought, which is non-dualist (*advaya*) in orientation and ethos. For this stream of thought Reality is non-different, and whatever differences are experienced at the empirical level have only relative significance, and therefore cannot be treated as being real. It is against the background of non-dualism that the fundamental texts of Kashmir Śaivism came into being during the eighth century. In the *Śivasūtra*, or the *Aphorisms of Śiva,* and the *Spandakārikā,* or the *Stanzas on Vibration,* this monism is clearly reflected when Śiva is seen to be the metaphysical Absolute. This tradition, as initiated by the above texts, was developed by a galaxy of teachers, which ultimatley reached its culmination in the person of Abhinavagupta, who not only synthesized various strands of thought that were extant in Kashmir at that time, but enriched it philosophically in a manner that none other than him could do.

At this juncture it may be asked as to how, and in what manner, has Tantrism been responsible in shaping the direction of Kashmir Śaivism? It is well to remember that the nature and content of a text is determined largely by the prevailing context that may be existing at the time of the emergence of the text. When this hermeneutical principle is applied to the texts of the *Śivasūtra* and *Spandakārikā,* it tells us that there must already have been a religious viewpoint which must have formed the intellectural background of these texts. The religious background that prevailed at the time of composition of the above two texts was basically Tāntric. The Śaiva scriptures are, thus, either termed as Āgamas or Tantras. These Āgamic or Tāntric texts are of varied nature, in that they differ both in content and size.[7] These texts basically concern themselves with such rituals which inform the worshipper as to how Śiva, as well as gods and goddesses that are associated with him, have to be worshipped. Description of such secret rituals is also given which are seen as being the means of salvation. These Tāntric rituals, however, cannot be performed apart from the ritual formulas (*mantras*), and so accordingly much space is given in explaining the content of these secret formulas. Also we are told how the various Tāntric deities have to be ritually worshipped by locating sacred spaces through the medium of mystical diagrams (*maṇḍalas, yantras*). Correspondence between man, who is seen as the embodiment of microcosm, and the deities that surround the various spaces of the universe are depicted in such a manner as would ultimately give rise to the Tāntric concept that the microcosm corresponds to the macrocosm. The correspondence between the mircrocosm and the macrocosm forms an essential part of Tāntirc thinking, and would accordingly penetrate, at the deepest level of thought, Kashmir Śaivism.

It is within this framework from which the foundational texts, namely, the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā,* of Kashmir Śaivism have emerged. In these texts the Tāntric rituals are so interiorized as would result in the abandonment of rituals of exterior nature. This process of interiorization is accomplished by making the use of yogic techniques that would not only result in the subduing of the fluctuations of the mind, but would enable the adept to interiorize the external rituals in such a way as would result in complete identification between the mircrocosm and the macrocosm. The Tāntric notion of the sacred circle (*cakra*) is not merely to be understood as the place where the Tāntric deities have to be worshipped; rather the circle is seen to represent the centre of the adept's cognitive and other energies, which are said to be the powers of consciousness. The adept's consciousness is identical with Śiva who, as the master of the circle, resides in it. So the main object of worship is nothing else but one's own consciousness on account of it being non-different from Śiva. Insofar as the *mantras* are concerned, they are said to be identical with the adept's mind. They emerge from the Universal Consciousness and merge back into it, and thereby are filled with the divine powers of Śiva.[8] In this scheme of understanding whatever the yogī utters or says is considered to be the embodiment of prayer.[9] Also when a yogī offers a ritual prayer unto his deity, and thereby meditates upon him, he realizes that the world is nothing but the play of his own consciousness. Upon realizing the world as being the play of his own consciousness, the yogī thereby receives real initiation (*dīkṣā*), which qualifies him to engage in such Tāntric rituals which the non-initiates are debarred from performing.

From the above analysis it is now clear that Tantrism, in one form or the other, has had a direct bearing upon the development of Kashmir Śaivism, or what is called the Trika Śaivism. Prior to the emergence of

Trika Śaivism in its systematic form, there existed a number of Tāntric schools, which formed the basis for Śaivism of Kashmir. As already pointed out, the texts or the sacred scriptures of these Tāntric schools are either called Āgamas or Tantras. As Āgamas are seen to be divine speech, so they cannot be said to have originated at a particular historical period. While believing in their non-historical origin, these sacred texts, thus, are said to be eternal, and so non-different from the Supreme Speech (*parā-vāk*), which is but Paramaśiva itself.

THE TĀNTRIC SCHOOLS

Tradition tells us that originally the Āgamic texts consisted of nine crore of verses, which, on account of historical degeneration, were lost to humanity. These sacred texts were known only to Bhairava, who is said to be one of the forms of Śiva. From Bhairava downward the divine lore of these texts was successively transmitted to eight divine beings, and during the process of transmission from one divine being to another the number of verses that are said to have remained are believed to be approximately one crore. The line of transmission from Bhairava onwards is given in the following manner: Bhairava, Bhairavī Devī, Svacchanda, Lakula, Aṇurāṭ, Gahaneśa, Abjaja, Śakra, and Guru. Whether this traditional account can be believed or not is a matter of opinion. The fact of the matter is this: There existed the entire corpus of the sacred lore in the mythic age of Satyayuga, which, on account of spiritual and moral degeneration, were lost in subsequent ages.[10] Insofar as the present age is concerned, which is termed as the Kaliyuga, this sacred lore had to be revived, and the revival could be actualized only through the divine initiative.

The actualization of divine initiative concerning the restoration of Tāntric lore is described traditionally thus. Śrīkaṇṭha, one of the names of Śiva, is said to have taken pity on suffering humanity, which had, on account of the disappearance of the salivific lore of Tantrism, sunk deeply into the abyss of ignorance and spiritual darkness. Accordingly he asked the sage Durvāsa to revive the sacred knowledge that is contained in the Śaivāgamic texts. The sage, while classifying the Śaivāgamas into three branches of non-dualism, dualism-cum-non-dualism, and dualism, gave birth to three mind-born sons to whom this knowledge was imparted. The three sons were Tryambaka, Amardaka and Śrīnātha. Tryambaka was taught the monistic Āgamas, whereas to Śrīnātha was handed down the lore of those Āgamas which taught dualism-cum-non-dualism. Insofar as the knowledge of dualist Tantras is concerned, it was taught to

Amardaka. It is to these three mind-born sons to whom the three Tāntric schools owe their existence, and which seem to have been existing in the Valley of Kashmir prior to the emergence of Trika Śaivism. In addition to these three Tāntric schools, there came into being a fourth Tāntric school which owed its existence to a descendent of Tryambaka on the side of his daughter, and is accordingly called as Half-of-Tryambaka (*ardhatryambaka*).

How for this traditional account concerning the origin of the three Tāntric schools is reliable is a matter for further historical research. Insofar as the origin of monistic Śaivāgamas is concerned, the account seems to be reliable, as we have a definite proof that this school owed its existence to Tryambaka. In the closing chapter of *Śivadṛṣṭi*[11] of Somānanda we learn that Somānanda was the nineteenth descendant of Tryambkāditya. Of the first fourteen descendants no account is furnished. It is from the fifteen descendant onward that a reliable account is given. The fifteenth descendant is said to have been Saṅgamāditya, and from him the line of descent consists of Varṣāditya, Aruṇāditya, Ānanda, and Somānanda.

It is Somānanda who, as the grand teacher of Abinavagupta, gave a firm philosophical foundation to Kashmir Śaivism in terms of his doctrine of *recognition* (*pratyabhijñā*). As the grand teacher of Abhinava, Somānanda must have lived in the ninth century. On account of him being a contemporary of Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa who, according to the *Rājataraṅgiṇī,* lived during the reign of Avantivarman (855-83). If Somānanda lived in the ninth century, then Tryambkāditya, the first in the line of descendants, must have lived in the fourth century of our era, which means that all the three Tāntric schools must have originated in the Valley of Kashmir around this period of time. This assertion concerning the three Tāntric schools as having originated in the fourth century AD also means that, prior to the emergence of these schools, there must have been existing a kind of Śaivism which was purely ritualistic without any philosophic content. A non-philosophic Śaivism would mean that people must have worshipped various deities, and among which Śiva must have been given a little more prominence.

What we know for certain is that the ancient people of Kashmir were the Nāgas. The *Nīlamata Purāṇa*[12] tells us that the Valley of Kashmir was initially a huge lake. It was on account of the religious austerities of Prajāpati Kāśyapa that the waters of the lake were drained off by actualizing a gorge in the mountains near the present-day Bārāmullā. Upon draining off the waters of the lake, there emerged the land mass of the Valley. This legendary account is repeated *ad verbum* in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*[13] of Kalhaṇa. Further we are told that the initial settlers were either the Nāgas or Piśācas. As and when the Indo-Aryans made their settlement in the Valley is difficult to tell. What can, however, be asserted with a degree of certainty is that there must have already occurred a considerable amount of racial mixture between the Nāgas and the Piśācas, who are also known as the Dardic Aryans, by the time Indo-Aryans came to settle in the Valley. It is with the coming of the Indo-Aryans that Śaivism must have been introduced into Kashmir.

Whatever may have been the nature of the religious and cultural impact of the Indo-Aryans upon the local populace of Kashmir, what we know for certian is that it was during the reign of Aśoka (273-232 BC) that Buddhism was introduced into the Valley, which means that the Valley of Kashmir must have been in touch with the rest of India from earlier times. Whatever be the case, we know that the ancient religion of the people of Kashmir was polytheistic in orientation, and so must have engaged in the worship of pan-Indian as well as local deities. Besides the worship of personified natural forces, the people also seem to have worshipped snakes. There seems to have occurred some kind of discontinuity in the worship of local deities on account of the influence which Buddhism seems to have exerted. The break or discontinuity in the worship of local deities is well documented in the *Nīlamata Purāṇa*, and we are accordingly told that the Lord of Nāgas, Nīlanāga, was angry with the people of Kashmir for not being propitiated, and so he sent down a terrible snowfall upon the Valley, which caused great destruction and havoc.[14] This natural destruction must have led to the restoration of local religion, which must also have included the worship of Śiva.

The polytheistic faith of the local people seems to have had a peaceful co-existence with Buddhism. Antagonism between the two communities, however, seems to have been given rise to when Kaṇiṣka (AD 125-60) gifted the Valley of Kashmir to the Buddhist Church.[15] This antagonism resulted in real conflict when Nāgārjuna assumed the political power over the destiny of the people, and consequently made the use of this power in the spread of Buddhism. It is at this point of time when real conflict between Buddhism and Śaivism seems to have been actual. As a consequence of this conflict the local Śaivites, for the first time, engaged in the task of giving some kind of theoretical shape to the teachings and praxis of their faith, and this task of systematization was actually accomplished by the ascetic Candradeva. This conflict as well as the systematization of local Śaivism took place in the second century AD, and what took place for next six hundred years till the emergence of the foundational texts of Śaivism, we know next-to-nothing except that both Buddhism and Tāntric Śaivism co-existed side by side.

It is against this religious background that the traditional account concerning the Tāntric schools may be taken into consideration. As the emergence of these schools must have occurred round about fourth century AD, so the classification of the Tāntric canon must have also been initiated from this period onward, and peior to this date no such classification seems to have existed. Insofar as the date of composition of the various Tāntric texts is concerned, we know nothing about it. Most probably these texts, which are varied in size, must have been composed from the fourth century onward till the emergence of the *Śivasūtra,* which is said to have been composed by Vasugupta in the ninth century AD. It is from the date of the composition of this text that we have a definite historical knowledge of Trika Śaivism.

THE GENERAL FEATURES OF TRIKA

The Trika Śaivism, or what commonly is called Kashmir Śaivism, is oriented, generally speaking, towards an outlook that is Tāntric, and its scriptures, in the context of philosophic development, have been divided into three main branches, namely, dualistic (*bheda*), dualistic-cum-monistic (*bhedābheda*), and monistic (*abheda*).[16] The scriptures that are considered as being dualistic in their philosophic approach are technically called the Śaivāgamas, and their total number is said to be ten. The scriptures that have an ontology which simultaneously is both dualistic as well as monistic have been termed as Rudrāgamas, and are said to be eighteen in number.[17] The scriptures which have a monistic ontology are spoken as Bhairavāgamas, and are said to be sixty-four in number.[18] This classification of the scriptures indicates or tells us that there has been a clear philosophical development of Tantrism from dualism to monism in terms of which evolutionary trend of religious thought is made manifest.

These Āgamic or Tāntric texts, which have been accorded the cononical status, are traditionally believed to have issued from the five faces (*pañcamukha*) of supreme Śiva,[19] and the five faces are known as Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Vāmadeva, Aghora, and Sadyojāṭa. This anthropomorphic concept of Śiva as possessing five faces is, at the philosophic level, seen to represent the five aspects or powers of supreme Reality, which are beyond the conceptual duality of anthropomorphism.

These five aspects or powers of the Supreme (*parā*) are consciousness (*cit*), bliss (*ānanda*), will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). Although monistic in orientation, the Trikism of Kashmir does not believe in an Absolute that is destitute of supreme power. The Absolute of Trika Śaivism is basically a Person who, on account of innate dynamis, is never passive like the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. It is for this reason that the Absolute is spoken of in terms of powers (*śakti*) that are supreme and sovereign (*svātantrya*).

As analogues, these five faces or aspects of Paramaśiva are, at the iconographic level, concretized by Svacchandanātha. At the popular level of religiosity it is believed that the Īśāna face of Śiva looks upward, whereas the other four faces face the four directions. What this popular belief indicates is the fact that Śiva as Absolute is all-pervasive and that the objective universe and the entities therein cannot be viewed apart from that which is Supreme as well as Transcendent. To validate the assertion that the Āgamic texts enjoy the canonical status, the belief arose that these texts have been uttered in and through the mysterious face of Śiva, and so are to be treated as being the Divine Speech itself.[20] Even within the Tāntric framework these texts are to be evaluated hierarchically. The texts that contain the dualistic revelation would have to be treated, in contrast to the texts that reveal monistic wisdom concerning Reality, as belonging to the lower wrung of revelation, which means that the Trika Śaivism treats revelation as being progressive. It is this notion of revelation which allows the Trikists to treat other ways of salvation as being pointers to the revelation that is revealed in Trikism. So accordingly are Trika scriptures being treated as possessing the ultimate revelation of Divine Speech.[21]

The Āgamic texts that are given the superior canonical status, on account of them having been uttered by the mysterious face of Śiva, are the *Namakatantra, Siddhatantra,* and the *Mālinītantra.* All these texts are collectively referred to as *ṣaḍardha,*[22] or Half-of-Six, thereby justifying the nomenclature of Trika, which denotes that which is triadic. Each text has a specific concern, and deals with it accordingly. The *Namakatantra* deals with such religious themes that are philosophic in orientation or have direct bearing upon the religious conduct of the believer. Insofar as the *Siddhatantra* is concerned, it deals with such religious practices which have a direct link with the religious life of a person like ritual, ethical discipline, and meditational techniques. The last text, namely, the *Mālinītantra,* has set out the task for itself in terms of which it endeavours to synthesize the concerns of the other two texts.[23]

Kashmir Śaivism, generally speaking, is spoken of as Trika or Triadic Śaivism on account of its trinitarian doctrines.[24] Some of the most important triadic principles it upholds are the following:

1. To begin with: Kashmir Śaivism has classified its scriptures into three main branches in accordance with their philosophic bent, and the three branches of cononical texts are the Śaivāgamas, Rudrāgamas, and the Bhairvāgamas. Apart from this classification of the canon, there are texts which the Trika Śaivism cherishes most on account of the belief that they have come out from the mysterious face of Śiva. The texts that belong to this category are the *Namakatantra,* the *Siddhatantra,* and the *Mālinī,* also known as the *Mālinīvijayatantra.*

2. The entire cosmic manifestation, from the transcendent level to the gross, is said to be consitituted by a trinity of principles, which are Śiva, Śakti and Nara. Śiva represents the principle of transcendence, whereas Śakti represents the principle of power in terms of which Śiva, as it were, becomes the manifest cosmos. In theological terms Śiva would be seen as the absolute Lord, whereas Śakti will be termed as the embodiment of bondage (*pāśa*) on account of her being responsible for causing the world to be. Insofar as Nara or Man is concerned, he may be seen as representing the manifest categories or entities that are constitutive of the objective universe. This trinity of principles constitutes the theological foundation of Śaivism, and so accordinly is made a theological classification in terms of *pati, pāśa,* and *paśu.* The further theological implication of this classification is this: Śiva in its manifest condition is represented by Man (*nara*), and so denotes the finite state of unfreedom which the human condition represents. Insofar as Śakti is concerned, she, as the principle as well as the embodiment of power, is viewed as an intermediary between Śiva and Nara, in that it is in and through Śakti that Śiva descends to the position of Nara, and, conversely speaking, Nara is enabled to ascend the divine ladder of Śiva, which means that the bonded soul, upon realizing his essential nature as being non-different from Śiva, attains to the state of absolute freedom. Śakti, from a theological perspective, is viewed as being the innate power of Śiva, and so, at least theoretically speaking, is non-different from Śiva. It is by virtue of Śakti that Śiva manifests himself as Nara, which means that the entire manifest universe is nothing else but the external movement of Śiva. It is the very Śakti of Śiva which enables the Nara to recognize himself who he is, which, within the Trika context, means the realization that the finite and the infinite are non-different, or, should we say, Śiva and the bonded soul (*paśu*) are essentially of identical nature.[25]

3. Kashmir Śaivism is called Trika because it conceives of, insofar as its dogmatic formulation is concerned, an intermediary trinity (*parāpara-trika*) in terms of three absolute powers of Śiva. And these powers are will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). It is upon realizing these absolute powers that a yogī arrives at the state of realization whereby he recognizes himself to be essentially non-different from Śiva. These three powers are also said to be representing the three faces of Śiva. Moreover, these powers are the real marks of identification of a real yogī, which, as a principle of theological verification, means that the yogī who has these powers in his possession, has really become one with Śiva. Accordingly is such a yogī described thus:

> (Upon gaining these powers the yogī has the capacity of) destroying and creating (his) body, abandoning or taking it up (at will), while clearly perceiving that it is one (with his true nature and hence under his control) through the direct non-discursive insight (*nirvikalpatayā*) that: 'I myself, who am free and ever unobscured consciousness alone, and the creator of both these (bodies)'. Thus his state becomes that of the (universal) subject, and he attains the same state of experiencing subjectivity as that of the Supreme Self, who is the pure experiencing and cognizing subject. Although (this is) already (his condition to begin with), he acquires it just then (as it were) by recognizing it. Thus, by recognizing his true essential nature (*satyātmasvarūpa*) he becomes the Lord of the wheel (*çakreśvara*).[26]

4. The yogī, upon realizing the trinity of powers of will, knowledge and action, recognizes the three aspects of his divine nature in terms of luminosity (*prakāśa*), dynamism (*vimarśa, spanda*) and homogeneous bliss (*sāmarasya*). These three aspects of Paramaśiva are called as the transcendental triad (*parā-trika*). The luminous aspect of Śiva is said to be identical with consciousness, and accordingly is termed as the *śiva* aspect of the Absolute (*anuttara*). As it is consciousness which reveals the world of objects, likewise the world as a manifest category is actualized on account of Śiva being nothing else but consciousness. What it amounts to saying, at the epistemological level, is this: The objects that are outside consciousness are perceived to the extent they possess the quality of being manifest. The quality of being manifest is not innate to the objects of perception. Were that be the case, then the objects of perception would always be manifest to everyone. The objects acquire this quality of being manifest by being bathed by the light of consciousness which shines forth within the perceiver as his innate nature. In this manner are objects made to manifest in the field of consciousness.[27] And this is made clear when Abhinava writes:

> Now, according to us (*iha*), the ultimate object of realization is nothing but one's own being (*svabhāva*) and that is the luminous nature (*prakāśasvarūpa*) of all existing things because it is illogical to suppose that which does not manifest (*aprakāśa*) can have any being of its own. Nor is that multiple because there is no division within its own nature, for it makes no sense that the light should assume some other nature apart from its own. Nor do time and space divide it because that Light is their own nature as well. Thus the Light is only one and that same (Light) is consciousness, (for), as all unanimously agree, consciousness illumines the nature of things (*arthaprakāśarūpa*). Again, that Light is not dependent on anything: dependence is in fact essentially the status of the objects of illumination (*prakāśayatā*), which is its dependence on some other Light (to illumine it). But, as there is no other Light, the one Light is independent and free (*svatantra*). Thus, because of this freedom alone and the absence of spatial, temporal and formal limitations which it entails, (the Light) pervades all things, is eternal and its own nature (*svabhāva*), is at once formless and the form of all things. Again, its freedom is the power of bliss, the wonder (it inspires), the power of will, its luminous nature (which is) the power of consciousness, its capacity for reflection and judgement (*āmarśa*) is the power of knowledge and that of its omniformity, the power of action. So even though it is thus endowed with these primary powers, the Light is in fact unconditioned and, possessing the powers of will, knowledge and action, is Śiva Who reposes within His own inherent bliss. It is He who, by virtue of His freedom, makes Himself manifest in a limited form, is thus said to be the individual soul (*aṇu*). He then again makes Himself manifest by virtue of His freedom in a such a way as to shine (in His essential) Śiva-nature which is the unconditioned Light.[28]

Insofar as the dynamic aspect of Paramaśiva is concerned, it is considered as a potentiality of infinite power and capacity. It is through this self-apprehending power (*vimarśa*) that the objective world outside one's consciousness or subjectivity is being experienced or cognized as one's own self. As the innate nature of the Absolute, it is spoken of as the power (*śakti*) of luminous (*prakāśa*) consciousness. The state of unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* within the Absolute is referred to as *sāmarasya*, or the state of equipoise.[29] What this view of Reality as being both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* denotes is that human consciousness, which is non-different from Śiva, is engaged in a continuous activity. And this fact is brought out when we are told:

> The nature of the power of consciousness (*citi*) is reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśa*) and is Supreme Speech which, spontaneously emergent, is the lordship of the Supreme Self, the freedom which is the intent (*aunmukhya*) (towards both immanence and transcendence). That pulsing radiance

> (*sphurattā*), the Great Being, unspecified by time and space, is the essence of the Supreme Lord and so is said to be his Heart.[30]

For the yogī, the experience of this state of oneness (*sāmarasya*) means that he has realized his essential nature as being that of Śiva. He arrives at this state through the process of introversion of consciousness whereby he sinks into the abyss of his own subjectivity. In this manner is established empirically the non-dual nature of Reality. Insofar as the perceptual and conceptual experience of deversity or of difference is experienced, it occurs, so we are told, when consciousness is externalized. So both the inward movement of unity and outward movement of diversity are contained within consciousness, and so accordingly is Reality referred to as consisting of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*.

5. There are other types of trinities like the Trika yoga, or what may be called the Trika ways or methods (*upāyas*) of salvation. The Trika system consists mainly of three paths of salvation, which are the Way of Śiva (*śāmbhava-upāya*), the Way of Power (*śākta-upāya*), and the Way of the Individual (*āṇava-upāya*). There is also an ontological trinity, which has a direct bearing upon existence as such. The Trika Śaivism is of the opinion that existence *per se* is characterized by diversity, qualified diversity, and complete unity. These stages of existence correspond to, and manifest through, such categories of existence as *māyā, vidyā,* and *śakti. Māyā* is said to be that power of the Absolute whereby the manifestational deversity is initiated as well as actualized. At the level of *vidyā* there is a tendency towards diversity, which means that the tendency towards manifestational diversity is in a potential state. So this level is spoken of as the stage of duality which is a qualified one. Using the analogy of fire, we may say that insofar as the spark resides in fire and does not separate itself from it, to that extent the state of unity prevails. But at the same time we know the potency of spark exists in the fire, and at an appropriate time it will separate itself from fire, thereby giving rise what is called the state of difference. Insofar as the stage of *śakti* is concerned, it is non-different from the Absolute, as is light from electricity. As the Absolute and its *śakti* are said to be non-different, so this state of experience entails for a yogī the eradication of perceptual as well as of conceptual dualities that ordinarily are experienced when one is either awake or in a dream. Also there is an another form of trinity that is constitutive of existence-in-the-world. To the extent one is tied to an embodied existence, which means to be in the world, to that extent one is said to be in the state of bondage (*pāśa*). And this bondage is determined either by one of the three impurities (*mala*) or by all of

them together. The impurities are either of the nature of action (*karman*), or innate (*āṇava*), or of the nature of delusion (*māyīyā*).[31] It is said that each individual being, no matter what the state or status of existence may be, is born with an impurity that is innate to him. Insofar as the other two impurities are concerned, they are either acquired in this very existence or, at least for some, is inherited from previous existences. The *āṇava-mala,* although innate in the sense of having been inherited from the past lives, can be negated or eradicated when the Śaiva practices are followed. Likewise the other two impurities can be burnt in the fire of esoteric practices of the Trika.

In addition to the above trinities, there is an another trinity which concerns the Goddess. No difference whatsoever exists between the Goddess and Śiva at the transcendental level of unity. Accordingly the Goddess, at this level, is worshipped as *parā-devī,* or the Goddess who is transcendent. When the tendency towards diversification is initiated, there occurs, if not actually, at least conceptually, a movement which is towards separation in terms of which the experience of distinction is made a possibility. At this stage of qualified difference the Goddess is worshipped as *parāpara-devī.* When it comes to the phenomenal level of manifestation, the Goddess is anthropomorphized, and so such qualities or attributes are imputed onto her which are experienced by men and women existentially. At this stage of anthropomorphism the Goddess is worshipped as *aparā-devī.* In analogous terms is the manifestation of Supreme Speech as the spoken speech analyzed. At the transcendent level there is absolute unity, and this stage is called the *paśyanti,* which means seeing. The stage where the Word (*vāc*) moves downwards towards the spoken speech is called the *madhyamā,* or the middling. Finally, we have the spoken speech, which is called *vaikharī.* It is at this stage that the Word gives rise to deversity by designating things and entities. Even the three absolute powers of Śiva, which collectively are called *ambā,* are said to correspond to three divinities, which are Jyeṣṭhā, Raudrī, and Vāmā.[32] Esoterically speaking, these divinities are seen as energies, and it is as energies that they give rise to three male divinities, which are Rudra, Brahmā and Rāma (Viṣṇu). The respective natures of these energies are the three powers of knowledge, will, and action, which are considered to be the abosolute powers of Śiva. These three energies and their respective powers are symbolized by fire, moon and sun.[33] In esoteric terms it means that the three absolute powers of Śiva are actualized in and through these divinities, or should we say that Śiva, upon assuming the form of these divinities, expresses his powers through them.

The Āgamic Sources

It was J.C. Chatterjee who, for the first time, made use of the term Kashmir Śaivism for all those Śākta-Śaivite schools that emerged from, and developed upon, the soil of Kashmir. It was the genius of Abhinavagupta who brought about a theological synthesis between these schools, and called the synthesized Śaivism as Trika. The Trika Śaivism, thus, includes such schools as the Pratyabhijñā, Spanda, Krama, and Kaula. From a historical point of view, Kashmir Śaivism began to take a coherent theological form from the ninth century AD onwards with the appearance of Vasugupta's foundational text, namely, the *Śivasūtra.*[34] In the *Śivasūtra* are explained systematically the basic religious themes that would give the direction to the theory as well as praxis. Even upon the emergence of the foundational text of Kashmir Śaivism, the ideas and practices remained scattered, and each school, whether Śākta or Śaiva, stuck to its own viewpoint till the appearance of Abhinavagupta who, by synthesizing into what is called Trika, brought about coherence into the entire body of diffused thought and practice. Prior to the appearance of systematic treatises on philosophy and theology, the doctrinal sources of Kashmir Śaivism were totally dependent upon the Āgamic texts. As cononical texts, the Āgamas were considered to be revelatory in nature and about which we have already said something above. As to why the Āgamic texts are considered to be revelatory, and thereby non-human in origin and eternal in duration, is because of the following reasons:

> Creation or, to be more exact, manifestation, is . . . of two kinds. One relates to speech and the other to substance (*vācya-vācaka-ātmaka*). Speech is also represented by two kinds, divine and human. The Śaivāgamas are the divine speech and as such are the grossest manifestation of the Supreme self-reflection (*vimarśa*), as different from the individual self-reflection, which is the cause of ordinary human speech. Speech, as we have already shown in the course of our treatment of the *Parātriṁśikā-vivaraṇa,* has an eternal existence in a state of identity with the *parā* (the Transcendent). The Āgamas are but divine speech, and as such they also have similar eternal existence. According to the Trika, therefore, there can be nothing like an origin of Śaivāgamas. There is only appearance or reappearance of them at the divine will.[35]

The traditional belief concerning the Āgamic texts is this: These texts, upon their initial manifestation, are said to have consisted of nine crore of verses, which were known, during the *golden age* (*satya-yuga*), to Bhairava alone. In subsequent ages that followed the *golden age* a number of verses, during the process of impartation from teacher to disciple, were lost. There reached a time when the entire sacred lore seems to have been lost on account of the moral degeneration that crept from one age to another. Whether actually the Āgamic texts consisted of nine crore of verses or not is a matter for religious belief and not for history. As to how the revival of the lost lore occurred is accounted in the following manner, which too is more of a legand than history. It is said that Rāvaṇa, the demon-king of Laṅkā, stole them and hid them in the heavens above. Somehow these stolen verses reached Bibhīṣaṇa, the monkey-supporter of Rāma, who is said to have handed them over to Rāma. From Rāma they reached Lakṣmaṇa, from Lakṣmaṇa to Siddhas, from Siddhas to Dānavas, from Dānavas to Guhyakas, and from Guhyakas to Yogins.

The above explanation concerning the origin of the Āgamas gives us the traditional history from the time of the Age of Truth (*satya-yuga*) to the time of our own Degenerate Age (*kali-yuga*).[36] Tradition tells us that these Āgamic texts disappeared, upon the emergence of the Degenerate Age, when the Siddhas are believed to have retired to the solitude of deep forests. Since the disappearance of the Āgamas caused spiritual downfall among the people, Śiva is said to have incarnated himself as Śrīkaṇṭhanātha, and accordingly asked Durvāsa to revive the Āgamic lore, so that the *dharma* may eventually be restored. Durvāsa, in turn, is said to have given birth to three mind-born sons, namely, Tryambaka, Śrīnātha, and Amardaka. These three mind-born sons preached the monistic, qualified dualistic, and dualistic Āgamas respectively. There is a fourth school which is said to have descended from the side of Tryambaka's daughter, and is accordingly spoken as Ardhatryambaka School.

We have already given this traditional account concerning the origin and revival of the Āgamas elsewhere. What we need to concentrate upon is to find out the historical traces of monistic Śaivism of Kashmir. It is believed that Tryambaka was responsible in reviving the monistic branch of Āgamas in Kashmir, who, according to the *Śivadṛṣṭi*[37] of Somānanda, is said to have been the initiator of the line of descent of which Somānanda is considered to be the nineteenth descendant.[38] As Somānanda lived in the ninth century, so Tryambaka must have lived during the fourth century AD, which means that monistic school of Śaivism goes back at least to the fourth century. It is the time when Mahāyāna was at its peak, and also the time when Buddhist Tantrism was taking its shape. May be Śaivite Tantras owe their emergence to the influence which Buddhism might have exerted upon the diffused Śaivism that existed in Kashmir.

The sudden emergence of the *Śivasūtra* and of the *Spandakārikā*[39] could not have been necessitated by chance. There must have been influences working behind the scene. It is probable that Śaṁkara's Advaita philosophy might have been responsible in hastening the development of monism of Kashmir Śaivism. It is said that Śaṁkara visited the Valley of Kashmir,[40] and during his stay he must definitely have left indelible marks upon the local Śaivite faith. Śaṁkara was not only a monistic philosopher, but was also himself the follower of Tantras. He accepted the authority of the Tantras and refers to the sixty-four Tantras in his *Saundaryalaharī* thus: *catuṣaṣṭhya tantraiḥ sakalam abhisanhayā bhuvanam.* Whatever be the truth concerning his visit to Kashmir, there remains the fact that the Vedānta of Śaṁkara as well as Trika Śaivism have similar, if not totally identical, views with regard to the nature of Reality. Both are of the view that Reality is all-inclusive, and so is the source of that which is phenomenal.[41] The ontology and epistemology of Trika Śaivism, however, differs radically from the one which Advaita Vedānta upholds. One of the main differences between the two schools concerns itself with the content of Reality itself. For the Trika Śaivites Reality is not simply pure consciousness; rather it is viewed as being I-consciousness, which means that the Absolute is not a passive category, but is ever active. Unlike the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṁkara, Trika Śaivism thinks of the objective world as being actual emission of Śiva, which means that the world, even though constituted by diversity, is real and not like a dream or an epistemic illusion. Further the Trika Śaivites do not consider the Vedas as being eternal or infallible, as they think of the Tantras or Āgamas to be. Abhinavagupta, the finest flower of Trika Śaivism, asserts that, in the scheme of knowledge and understanding, the first place must be given to *reason,* second to *experience,* and third to *scriptures.* This epistemic view of knowledge seems to have been influenced by the Buddhist and Sāṁkhya philosophies. The Trika Śaivism, thus, seems to be, within the general Hindu outlook, heterodox and subversive, as it does not accord much importance either to the revelatory knowledge of the Vedas or to the Brāhmanic social structure of caste system. It even encounrages the so-called untouchables to seek the way of salvation,[42] which otherwise is kept away from them within the Brāhmanic social order.

Although the core or essence of the doctrines of Trika Śaivism is to be found in the Āgamas, yet it developed a vast philosophical literature of its own, which is quite independent of the Āgamas. The first independent text that emerged is the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta. It is within the religious framework of this text that the Pratyabhijñā and the Spanda schools must not be treated as being separate from, and independent of, each other. Rather they have to be seen as a single unit within the philosophic crucible of the Trika. They may, if we may use a simile, be treated as the two branches of the same tree, which is the Trika.[43] Vasugupta alongwith his disciple, Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, provided the metaphysical and religious foundation to the Spanda School, whereas Somānanda expounded, for the first time, the basic philosophic ideas of the School of Recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) in his most abstruse treatise, namely, the *Śivadṛṣṭi*.[44] Both the savants, while giving birth to these two branches or schools of thought, assert that they are following the fundamental religious pattern of the Trika.[45]

Although the *Śivasūtra* as well as the *Spandakārikā* are the foundational texts of the Spanda School,[46] it does not mean that the Pratyabhijñā School rejects the authority of the above texts. As the basic texts of Trikism, they, therefore, have been given the divine status by the adherents of Trika Śaivism. According to Kṣemarāja, Vasugupta had a dream in which Śiva informed him that he would find the text inscribed upon a rock on Mahādeva Mountain,[47] which would mean that the actual author of the text is Śiva and not Vasugupta. It is this traditional account concerning the origin of the *Śivasūtra* which is popularly accepted by the Kashmiri Śaivites, and so accordingly accept it to be revelatory in nature. Following the instructions of Śiva in the dream, Vasugupta, so we are informed, went to the place where the rock was said to be. By a mere touch the rock rolled, and amazingly he found the text inscribed on the slab. It is because of this supernatural occurrence that the text has been given the divine status.[48] If this traditional story is accepted at its face, it would mean that Vasugupta is not the author but simply a compiler of the text.

It is not far from truth to say that Kashmir Śaivism, prior to the emergence of *Śivasūtra,* had a nebulous existence, as it had no coherent dogmas and doctrines upon which it could rely. In its diffused state, Kashmir Śaivism relied more upon the Tāntric rituals than upon the intellectual grasp concerning the nature of Reality. This state of affairs existed because of its dependence upon such Āgamic texts[49] which suffered from the lack of cohesion of thought and presentation. Most of the Āgamic texts, in its earliest period, were mainly interpreted dualistically, and also were given to much ritualistic practices. It is only later on, when Śaivism began to take interest in philosophical problems, that these Āgamic texts were interpreted monistically, which at the same time meant that the philosophical issues were given due consideration. The Āgamic texts, which contain a wealth of information concerning the thought and praxis of early Śaivism, are the *Mālinīvijaya* or the *Mālinīvijayottara, Svacchanda, Vijñānabhairava, Ānandabhairava,*[50] *Mṛgendra, Netra, Naiśava, Svayambhuva,* and *Rudrayāmala.* On the follwoing Tāntric or Āgamic texts outstanding commentaries have been composed: *Svacchanda, Netra, Mālinīvijaya,* and *Mātaṅga.* The philosophical thinking and religious praxis received a new and vigorous direction upon the appearance of the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā.* The *Śivasūtra,* being a foundational text, has been commented upon profusedly. The best known commentary upon it is the one which Kṣemarāja wrote, and is known as *Vimarśinī,* whereas the commentary of Bhāskara, which too is important, is called the *Vārttika.*[51] There is an another important commentary of an unknown author, which is known as the *Vṛtti.*

LITERARY SOURCES

The foundational texts, as already pointed out above, are the Āgamic texts, and it is upon these textual sources that the religious and philosophical superstructure of Trika Śaivism has been built upon the appearance of the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta. Most of the Āgamic texts are varied, vast and complex and some of which, on account of the exigencies of time, have been lost in the debris of historical oblivion. The Āgamic texts that are available are few, and the ones that have been lost are known from quotations, which later commentators made use of in their seminal works. The most important Tāntric texts are the trinity of the *Namakatantra, Siddhatantra,* and the *Mālinīvijayatantra.* The text among this trinity that is no more available is the *Siddhatantra.* Insofar as the *Namakatantra* is concerned, it is known to us only by name. There are, however, many verses of the *Siddhatantra* to be found in Jayaratha's commentary on the *Tantrāloka* called *Viveka.* The last text, namely, the *Mālinīvijayatantra,* is available only in parts. The present printed text seems to have been a part of a larger text. This assumption is based upon the inference that a number of verses, which have been quoted in the *Tantrāloka,* are not to be found in the printed text that is available to us.[52] It may, therefore, safely be assumed that the printed text is only the end-portion (*uttara-bhāga*) of the corpus that is constitutive of the entire text known as the *Mālinīvijaya.*[53]

Next in importance to the Āgamic literature is the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta, who, as a great yogī (*siddha*), lived during the reign of Avantivarman (AD 855-83).[54] It means that Vasugupta must have lived during the first half of ninth century. Insofar as the text of the *Śivasūtra* is concerned, it has been received, with minor vriations, in two recensions, which accordingly has given rise to two commentorial traditions: One is led by Kṣemarāja and the other by Bhāskara.[55] Even though both the commentators differ somewhat in their interpretation of the text, they however have divided the text into three main sections. The three sections, according to Bhāskara, are the following:

1. The first section of the text is called the Description of the Nature of Light of Universal Consciousness (*Sāmānyacitprakāśa-svarūpanirūpaṇa*).
2. The Arising of Innate Knowledge (*sahajavidyodaya).*
3. The Vibration of the Powers (*vibhūtispanda*).

Insofar as Kṣemarāja is concerned, he does not name any section. Instead of designating the sections, he however tells us that each section deals with one of the salvific methods (*upāya*). Both the commentators make a conscious effort in pointing out that the *Spandakārikā,* which is next in importance to the *Śivasūtra,* follows closely the thinking that is contained in the *Śivasūtra.* In this way the *Śivasūtra* is seen as a text that provided the necessary reflective background for the future development of Trika. There have been composed a number of commentaries on the *Śivasūtra* and some of them are *Śivasūtra-vārttikam* of Varadarāja, *Śivasūtra-vārttika* of Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara, and *Sivaśūtra-vimarśinī* of Kṣemasrāja. It is with the help of these commentaries that one is enabled to have a grasp of that which one may otherwise find to be abstruse and complex.

Next in importance to the *Śivasūtra* is the *Spandakārikā.* Insofar as its authorship is concerned, there is difference of opinion among scholars. Some ascribe its authorship to Vasugupta, whereas others to Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa. Even the traditional opinion is divided concerning the actual authorship of the text.[56] Most of the traditional opinion, however, favours the view of Kṣemarāja, which ascribes the authorship of the text to Vasugupta. Whatever view or standpoint may be taken with regard to the authorship of the text, the fact remains that the *Spandakākrikā* is simply an amplification of the principles that are contained in the *Śivasūtra.* Accordingly the *Spandakārikā* may be seen, from a historical point, as being responsible in highlighting the Spanda principle of the *Śivasūtra,* and thereby facilitating the passage for the emergence of

Spanda branch of Śaivism.

In addition to the *Spandakārikā,* there are two other texts—*Spandāmṛta* and *Vāsavīṭīkā*—whose authorship is ascribed to Vasugupta. There is a confusion with regard to the former text, and the confusion is as to whether to treat it as an independent work or not.[57] There is a view which thinks that this work is identical with the *Spandakārikā.* Insofar as the latter text is concerned, it is a kind of commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā.* The text, however, is no more available in its complete form.

Next in importance to Vasugupta is Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa[58] who, as the disciple of the former, carried out faithfully the task that was assigned to him, and he did it by amplifying and clarifying the essential and significant doctrinal issues of Spanda. He wrote an important work, which is a commentary on the *Spandakārikā,* in which he has lucidly explained as to what is constitutive of Spanda philosophy, and the work is known as the *Spandasarvasva.* The other work which he wrote is the *Tattvārthacintāmaṇi,* and this work was most probably a commentary on the last portion of the *Śivasūtra.* The work, however, is no more extant. The other work which Kallaṭa wrote is called the *Madhuvāhinī.*[59] This work too is said to have been a kind of commentary on the *Śivasūtra.* Unfortunately the text is no more available.

The other important author in the Spanda branch is Rāmakaṇṭha[60] who, as the disciple of Utpaladeva, lived during the second half of tenth century. Rāmakaṇṭha, also called Rājānaka Rāma, wrote an important commentary, called *Spandasūtrārthāvalī,*[61] on Kallaṭa's *Brief Explanation.* The other two works he is said to have written are a commentary on the *Mātaṅgatantra* and a commetary on the *Bhagavadgītā.* Both the works are no more extant.

Next in importance to Rāmakaṇṭha who has commented on the Spanda doctrine is Bhāskarācārya. The historical gap between Bhāskara and Kallaṭa is that of five generations,[62] and the predecessors of Bhāskara who had succeeded Kallaṭa are the following: (1) Pradyumna Bhaṭṭa, (2) Prajñārjuna, (3) Mahādeva Bhaṭṭa, and (4) Śrīkaṇṭha Bhaṭṭa. If Kallaṭa lived in the later half of the ninth century, so it would not be wrong to say that Bhāskara must have lived either during the last part of tenth century or during the first part of eleventh century, which would mean that he was a contemporary of Abhinavagupta. This date is further confirmed when Abhinavagupta says that Bhāskara was his teacher.[63]

Bhāskara is said to have written the following works: *Śivasūtravārttika, Vivekāñjana* and *Kakṣyāstotra*. The *Śivasūtravārttika* is a commentary on the *Śivasūtra*, and differs radically from the interpretation of Kṣemarāja which he has given in his *Vimarśinī*. Insofar as the *Kakṣyāstotra* is concerned, it is a hymn to the Goddess, and is very popular among the Kashmiri Hindus. According to Abhinava, this hymn was written by the son of Divākara.[64]

While the Spanda branch of Śaivism was being developed, there subsequently appeared a full-fledged philosophical school, which came to be known as the School of Pratyabhijñā or that of Recognition. This philosophical school too is based upon such Tāntric texts which have an orientation that is monistic. Insofar as metaphysical interpretation of Reality as being non-dual is concerned, the Pratyabhijñā does not differ at all from the Spanda school. Where the two branches differ from each other is with regard to the means of salvation. The Spanda branch adhered to the three well-known means or methods of salvation, which are the Individual Way, the Way of Power, and the Way of Śiva. In contrast to these three Ways, the Pratyabhijñā has shown a Way which is much easier and which, prior to the emergence of this school, was not known. It was Somānanda who, for the first time, pointed out this easy path of salvation.

The first important thinker in the line of Pratyabhijñā branch is undoubtedly Somānanda who not only established the school, but gave to it a firm theoretical foundation. As the great grand teacher of Abhinavagupta, Somānanda must have lived during the ninth century AD. The preceptorial line that runs from Somānanda to Abhinava is like this:[65] Somānanda, Utpaladeva, Lakṣmaṇagupta, and Abhinavagupta. The other preceptorial line from Kallaṭa to Abhinavagupta runs like this: Kallaṭa, Mukula, Bhaṭṭendurāja, and Abhinavagupta.

The most important philosophical treatise that Somānanda wrote is his *Śivadṛṣṭi*. It is in this work that he set out to frame the basic principles of the philosophy of Recognition. The *Śivadṛṣṭi* differs considerably in its approach to the treatises that were composed in the Spanda branch, in that the effort is now made to give a systematic and logical presentation of Śaiva monism. The literature of the Spanda school mainly explained the dogmatic assertions without resorting to philosophical reasoning. This trend is now completely changed. The text of the *Śivadṛṣṭi* consists of 700 verses, which have been divided into seven chapters. As the text of the *Śivasūtra* was revealed to Vasugupta by Śiva in a dream, so *Śivadṛṣṭi* too is said to have been revealed by Śiva to Somānanda in a dream.[66]

The *Śivadṛṣṭi* of Somānanda lays down the basic principles of Trika philosophy in terms of what has come to be known as the Philosophy of Recognition or Pratyabhijñā. The text consists of seven chapters (*āhnikas*), and each chapter concerns itself with a specific philosophic topic. The first chapter deals with the main philosophical issues of ontology, epistemology and cosmology. The second chapter deals with the philosophy of grammar, particularly with such issues which Bhartṛhari and later Helarāja gave rise to. While explaining the descent of the absolute Word (*parā-vāk*) to the level of the spoken speech (*vaikharī*), Bhartṛhari has identified the trascendent Word with the Visionary state (*paśyanti*). This correspondence of the Word with the Visionary state is not acceptable to Somānanda. While dealing with the hierarchical levels of descent of the Word from its absolute unconditionedness to the condition of the phenomenal state, Somānanda, in contrast to the three levels of manifestational descent that Bhartṛhari proposes, speaks of four levels of manifestation, which are the Transcendent (*parā*), the Visionary (*paśyanti*), the Middle (*madhymā*), and the Spoken (*vaikharī*). It is not the Visionary, as Bhartṛhari advocates, which is identical with the Absolute state, but the Transcendent which, according to Somānanda, represents the Word in its absolute unconditionedness. Further Bhartṛhari speaks of the Visionary state as being equivalent to what he called *śabdabrahman*, and it is Word which appears (*vivarta*) as the phenomenal universe, which we experience as being different and outside of consciousness. To Somānanda this explanation of the universe as being an illusory appearance of the Word is not acceptable.[67] The third chapter concerns itself with the Śākta ontology, which conceives of Reality as being identical with the principal of Energy (*śakti*). In contrast to this view of Reality of Śāktas, the Śaivas think of Energy as being one of the states of Śiva—and Somānanda himself adheres to the view of the Śaivas concerning the nature of Reality.The fourth chapter deals with the cosmological question of the origin and nature of the universe. Adhering to a non-dualistic philosophic viewpoint, Somānanda propounds that the universe, being the self-manifestation, or, to put it in Tāntric language, self-emission, of Śiva, is non-different from the Absolute, or should we say, both of them are identical. Whatever differentiations are experienced or encountered, they are the outcome of what commonly is called in Indian philosophy ignorance (*avidyā, ajñāna*). The view this chapter delineates is that Śiva is everything and everything is Śiva. This is a viewpoint which follows the Sāṁkhyan theory of causality, which maintains that the effect, prior to its actualization, exists potentially in the cause, and so the theory accordingly is called *satkāryavāda*, or the doctrine which says that the effect is nothing but the self-transformation (*pariṇāma*) of the cause. In relation to the cosmic manifestation it means that the universe, prior to its objective manifestation, exists in an unmanifest state in the cause, and the cause is but Śiva itself. The fifth chapter expounds the non-dualistic doctrine of the Trika, which is termed as transcendental absolutism (*parādvaita*) by later commentators.[68] In the sixth chapter are discussed the various ontological and epistemological viewpoints that were prevalent at that time. The seventh chapter tells us as to why monism is needed, a monism which is theistic and affirmative. It is the theistic orientation which differentiates the monism of Trika Śaivism from other monisms, particularly from the monism of Advaita Vedānta. The Trika Śaivism differs radically from the Advaita Vedānta with regard to the nature of the Absolute, in that the Absolute for the former is a Person, whereas for the later it is an impersonal category. Also in this cahpter are discussed the fundamental philosophical issues of the Pratyabhijñā.[69] The chapter also throws light as to how Tryambkāditya established the Trika monism[70] and how and in what manner it charted out its own philosophical course of development.[71]

The other two works, which Somānanda is supposed to have written, are the *vivṛti* or the *Extended Explanation* and the *Parātriṁśikāvivṛti*. Both of these works are no more available. The former work is said to have been a commentary on his own *Śivadṛṣṭi*, whereas the latter text is a commentary on the *Parātriṁśikā*. Abhinavagupta in his own commentary on the *Parātriṁśikā* says that he mainly follows the line of thought which Somānanda has enunciated in his commentary on the text.[72]

Next in importance to Somānanda in the Pratyabhijñā branch is Utpaladeva. Abhinavagupta tells us that Utpaladeva was both the son as well as disciple of Somānanda.[73] If this be the case, then we can say that he must have lived at the end of the ninth century and in the beginning of the tenth century.

Utpaladeva, like his father, wrote seminal works on the Pratyabhijñā system of philosophy. The most important and popular work he wrote on the Pratyabhijñā is his *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. This philosophic work is written in a *kārikā* style. This text of Utpala has two commentaries from Abhinavagupta, namely, the *Virmarśinī* and the *Vivṛtivimarśinī*. On account of these commentaries the text gained subsequently great importance.

The text of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* has been divided into four books (*adhikāras*), and the first book has further been divided by Abhinavagupta into eight chapters (*āhnikas*). The first chapter tells us that the Self (*ātman*) needs no external evidence to prove its existence, as its existence is self-proved and self-evident. Moreover, the Self is self-sufficient both in action and knowledge. As to why we do not realize or know the self-sufficiency of the Self is because of ignorance. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that we realize the essential nature of the Self. This chapter also tells us as to how and in what manner can the divine nature of the Self be realized. The second chapter deals with such objections which the Buddhists might raise with regard to (i) the existence of a knowing subject which is transcendent to the momentary flow of consciousness; (ii) its powers of knowing and willing; (iii) the power of action; and (iv) the relation between the knowing and acting subjectivity, on the one hand, and between the powers of acting and knowing subject, on the other. The third chapter deals with the problem of the existence of a self-conscious being. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters deal with such problems which have a direct bearing upon the process of knowing like recollection, perception and conception. The seventh chapter attempts at establishing the existence of the Self as being pure consciousness, and which is seen as the source of all psychic phenomena. The last chapter shows us that the subjective Self as pure consciousness is non-different from the absolute Godhead.

The second book of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* is divided into four chapters in the commentary of Abhinavagupta, called *Vimarśinī*. The first chapter deals with the Trika cosmology and points out that the entire cosmos, being the self-emission of Śiva, is non-different from the Absolute. While discussing the nature of relativity, we are informed as to how emerges the conceptual framework of space and time. In the chapter are also dealt with such conceptions as, for example, action, relation, compound substance, space and time. While discussing suchlike concepts, we are told that these concepts, on account of their phenomenal nature, are relatively real. The third and fourth chapters take up such questions which are either epistemological or causal in nature.

The third book of the text has been divided into two chapters. One of them deals with the Trika cosmology, and accordingly gives an analysis of the thirty-six categories (*tattvas*), which are said to be constitutive of the entire cosmos. The other chapter tells us as to why the Self, which essentially is limitless and infinite, experiences, at the empirical level of existence, both finitude and limitedness. It is discovered that the Self, on account of impurities (*malas*), finds itself as a bound being (*paśu*). It is in the context of man as a bound being that the nature of bondage, liberation and the four subjective state of consciousness, namely, the waking, sleeping, dreaming and the state which transcends all the three and is, accordingly, called the Fourth, are taken into consideration.

The fourth book has only one chapter, which discusses the triple hierarchy of the bound self (*paśu*), of the divine being (*pati*) who has partially realized the state of unity, and the Absolute. Also discussed is the nature of liberation-while-alive (*jīvanmukti*) with reference to three innate natures or tendencies (*guṇas*), which are the good (*sattva*), the passionate (*rajas*), and the inert (*tamas*).

Utpala is said to have written a commentary on his *Pratyabhijñākārikā*, which is no more available. It is to this commentary to which Abhinava refers as *ṭīkā*. It is said that the text consisted of six thousand verses. In addition to this commentary, Utapala also wrote a *Brief Explanation* (*vṛtti*) on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. In this text Utpala attempts at clarifying the essential points of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*.

Apart from the above works, Utpala also wrote the *Siddhatrayī*, in which the Trika philosophy in general is discussed. The text, however, is a collection of three small, but independent, works of great value. It is believed that Abhinavagupta wrote a commentary, called *Vimarśinī*, on the *Siddhatrayī*, which however is lost. We know of this commentary only through references in other works.[74]

Utpaladeva was not only a philosopher, but was a man of deep religious faith and devotion, and this becomes quite evident when we read his outstanding devotional work called *Śivastotrāvalī*. It has a commentary by Kṣemarāja, and is referred to by Madhurāja Yogin in his *Śāstra Parāmarśa*. According to Madhurāja, the *Śivastotrāvalī* is so outstanding that one realizes the purity of soul merely by reading it. Accordingly the soul is enabled to enter the abode of Śrīkaṇṭha.[75]

While various thinkers laid down the basic principles both in the Spanda branch and the Pratyabhijñā branch of Trika Śaivism, it was left to the genius of Abhinavagupta to complete the unfinished task of synthesizing various strands of thought that were scattered and diffused. The towering personality of Abhinava is such that he has overshadowed all the thinkers that preceded as well as succeeded him. He was a prolific writer, and wrote numerous works both on philosophy, theology and aesthetics. It will not be possible for us here to deal with the vast amount of literature which he wrote. We shall mainly deal with some of his important works, which have a direct bearing upon the main concern of the book, which is Trika Śaivism.

In his initial literary output he seems to have concerned himself with Tāntric thought and praxis, and accordingly wrote such texts that would explain the complex nature of Tāntric practices. One of the earliest works is the *bodha-pañcadaśikā,* which consists of sixteen verses. The first fifteen verses attempt at explaining the Tāntric concept of Śiva and Śakti and their relation in the context of cosmic emanation. The sixteenth verse is devoted at explaining the object and aim of these verses. The main purpose in writing this small text seems to have been to enable his less intelligent disciples to have a grasp of the essentials of Tantrism.[76] The other important Tāntric work of his is the commentary on the *Mālinīvijaya,* which is called as *Vārttika.* This commentary seems to have been written on the request of his loving disciples, namely, Karṇa and Mandra.[77] The commentary is not available in its entirety, but is to be found in fragments and pieces.

The most important commentaries of Abhinava on a Tāntric text are his two commentaries, namely, *Vivaraṇa* and *Vivṛti,* on the *Parātriṁśikā,* which forms the concluding part of the *Rudrayāmalatantra.* Insofar as the title of the book is concerned, it is misleading and does not indicate the actual number of verses, which, according to the title, should be thirty verses. The text, however, has more than thirty verses. The actual title of the book seems to be *Parātriśikā,* which really means: "Parā, the mistress of the three, i.e., the three powers of will, knowledge and action."[78] Representing Tāntric thought at its best, the text of the *Parātriṁśikā* is quite difficult and complex and not easy to understand without the help of a commentary. Abhinava wrote these two commentaries on the text with the intention of making abstruse conceptuality somewhat easy for such people who are less intelligent.

Next to *Parātriṁśikā* is the *Tantrāloka,* which is an encyclopaedia in itself. The text is a treasure-house with regard to the Tāntric thought that is contained in the sixty-four monistic Āgamas. Both the ritualistic and philosophic aspects of Tantrism are dealt with equal measure. Although mainly concerned with the Kaula school of Tantrism, yet the text of the *Tantrāloka* also gives information about other schools like the Krama,[79] etc. The entire text consists of thirty-seven chapters, and the printed edition of it has been published, alongwith the commentary of Jayaratha, called *Viveka,* in twelve volumes. Subhaṭṭa Dattá, the teacher of Jayaratha, seems to have also written a commentary on the *Tantrāloka,* which is no more extant.[80] Abhinavagupta himself wrote a gist on this massive work of his, namely, the *Tantrasāra,* or the *Essence of Tantra.* There is an another work of Abhinavagupta which too concerns itself with the theme of the *Tantrāloka,* and the work is: *Tantravaṭadhāṇikā.* The best commentary ever written on the *Tantrāloka* is that of Jayaratha's *Viveka.*

The chapters that deal with philosophical issues are the first five, the ninth and the thirteenth chapters. The first chapter is introductory, and thereby informs us as to what philosophical issues will be tackled. The following four chapters deal with the four ways of salvation respectively, which are the (i) *anupāya,* (ii) *śāmbhava-upāya,* (iii) *śāktopāya,* and (iv) *āṇava-upāya.* The ninth chapter concerns itself with the thirty-six categories of existence, whereas the thirteenth chapter gives a detailed account of the theory of *karma.* Apart from the above themes, the text of the *Tantrāloka* also deals with the following issues:

What is it that gives rise to bondage? Upon giving a detailed account about the agencies that cause bondage to be, the author of the text then turns to the theme of freedom, which means as to how freedom from bondage is to be realized. Further the theme of knowledge versus ignorance is discussed, and accordingly we are informed what is it that distinguishes the former from the latter. As it is knowledge which causes liberation to be, so the nature of liberation in relation to other schools of thought is discussed in detail. Also the cosmological question concerning the origin of the universe is taken into consideration, which means that the Trika conception of knowledge as well as of Reality is given due weight. It is such-like philosophical questions that are taken within the ambit of *Tantrāloka.*

Abhinavagupta, in addition to above massive works on Tantrism, wrote a small work called the *Paramārthasāra.* In this text an attempt is made at explaining laconically the essential points of Trika philosophy, and so accordingly is given this title.[81] The text originally is said to have been composed by Śeṣa Muni, who also is known as Ādhāra Bhagavān or Anantanātha. The aim seems to have been at explaining the Sāṁkhya viewpoint concerning the nature of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti,* and how, through the process of discrimination, ultimate liberation may be realized. Some verses have either been altered, omitted or added with the intention of explaining the Trika Śaivism. Abhinavaputa also wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, called the *Bhagavadgītārtha-saṁgraha.* Technically speaking, it is not a commentary; rather in this text we are given a gist of each chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā.* The interpretation that Abhinava offers is a traditional Śaivite one, which he seems to have learnt from his teacher Bhaṭṭendurāja. This gist seems to have been written at the request of a Brāhmaṇa, Loṭaka,[82] who most probably may have been his relative.

The most important philosophical works which Abhinava wrote are his commentaries on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* of Utpalācārya. The commentary which he wrote on the *Vivṛti* of Utpala, which itself is a commentary of the latter on his own work, namely, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā,* is not available in full. The aim of this commentary is to clear up those points which are not either clear or have not been touched upon in the *Lāghvīvimarśinī.* The next commentary which Abhinava wrote on Utpala's *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* is called *Vimarśinī.* It is in these two commentaries in which Abhinava develops the universal philosophical approach of the Trika, and about which we shall be commenting when dealing with the philosophical issues of ontology and epistemology.

Abhinava also wrote extensively on the philosophy of aesthetics. The most important works that he wrote in this genre are the *Dhvanyālokalocana* and *Abhinavabhāratī.* The former text is a commentary on Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka,* whereas the latter is the commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata. Abhinava also wrote many smaller works on Trika Śaivism as well a number of hymns. Some of the works which belong to the former category are the following:

1. *Anuttarāṣṭikā*
2. *Paramārthadvādaśikā*
3. *Paramārthacarcā*
4. *Mahopadeśaviṁśatikā*

Insofar as the hymnal literature is concerned, some of the important hymns which Abhinava wrote are the following:

1. *Kramastotra*
2. *Bhairavastava*
3. *Dehasthadevatā-cakrastotra*
4. *Anubhavanivedana*
5. *Rahasyapañcadaśikā*

Post-Abhinava period also produced some of the outstanding thinkers who wrote extensively on Trika religion and philosophy. The most important author of this period definitely is Kṣemarāja. As a disciple of Abhinavagupta, he followed faithfully the path shown by his teacher while commenting on texts that his predecessors had written. As we know that Abhinava completed his last work during AD 1014-15, so it can safely be said that Kṣemarāja, like his teacher Abhinava, wrote on all the three subjects, namely, Tantra, Śaiva philosophy and poetics. The important texts he composed on Tantrism are his commentaries on some of the important Āgamic texts, which are: *Svacchandodyata* and *Netrodyata*. Both of them are commentaries on the *Svacchandatantra* and the *Netratantra* respectively. The other important Tāntric work of his is the *Vijñānabhairavodyata,* which is a commentary on the *Vijñānabhairava*. He also wrote a work on poetics, namely, the *Dhvanyāloka-locanodyata*.

Insofar as his works on Śaivism are concerned, he wrote very important commentaries. First and foremost in this genre falls his commentary on the first verse of the *Spandakārikā,* which is known as the *Spandasandoha*. In this brief commentary Kṣemarāja has endeavoured to throw light on the entire gamut of what Spanda philosophy is. The other important work he wrote on the *Spandakārikā* is his *Spandanirṇaya*. The *Spandanirṇaya* is a commentary on the entire text of the *Spandakārikā*. The other important works he wrote are the following:

1. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*
2. *Śivasūtravimarśinī*
3. *Vivṛti* on the *Stavacintāmaṇi*
4. *Parāpraveśikā*
5. *Bhairavānukarṇastotra*
6. *Paramārthasaṁgrahavivṛti*

Next in importance to Kṣemarāja definitely is Jayaratha, who it seems lived during the reign of Rājarāja (AD 1200). It was on the behest of the king that he began to study the *Tantrāloka,*[83] and accordingly was initiated into the secrets of Śaivism by Subbaṭṭ Datta.[84] He is said to have written both on Śaivism and poetics. Among his works that are available are the *Tantrālokaviveka,* which is a commetnary on the *Tantrāloka,* and the *Alaṁkāravimarśinī,* which is a work on aesthetics.

The other important author who wrote on Trika Śaivism is Maheśvarānanda, also known as Gorakṣa. He was the son of Mādhava of Cola.[85] He was the disciple of Mahāprakāśa, who was greatly influenced by Abhinava both in poetics and philosophy.[86] Upon being initiated into the secret practices of Śaivism, Maheśvarānanda is said to have, on account of the grace of his guru, achieved complete freedom from impurities. Accordingly he was able to master all the aspects of Trika Śaivism, and subsequently achieved proficiency in the Krama, Kaula and Pratyabhijñā systems.[87] The school of thought which Maheśvarānanda followed is called the Mahānaya or Mahārtha philosophy, which is said to be identical with the Trika Śaivism.[88] Insofar as his works are concerned, he is said to have written many texts both on philosophy and Śaivite practices. So far the only work that is available is his *Mahārthamañjarī* with his own commentary called *Parimala.* Some of the important works he is said to have written, which are known to us only through references, are the following:

1. *Mahārthamañjarī*
2. *Parimala,* which is a commentary on the above text
3. *Saṁvidullāsa*
4. *Pādukodaya*
5. *Mahārthodaya*
6. *Parā-stotra*
7. *Sūkta*

As he quotes extensively from the works of both Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja, so it may be presumed that he lived in the twelfth century AD. Insofar as his school of thought is concerned, it seems that the earliest teacher of this school was Śivānanda of Kashmir, who was responsible in giving birth to the Krama branch of Trika. So we may safely say that Maheśvarānanda, while accepting the Pratyabhijñā as the direct means of realization of the Ultimate,[89] basically followed the Gradation or Krama school. In the person of Maheśvarānanda a complete synthesis is achieved between the two Tāntric schools, namely, the Krama and the Kaula schools. He accepts that it is Kaulism which contains the essence of Tantrism, and so its presence is to be found in all the Tāntric schools.[90] Accordingly he maintains that the Way of Energy, which belongs to the Krama system, ultimately terminates in the Way of Śiva of Kaulism.[91] The aim of Maheśvarānanda, thus, is the same which Abhinavagupta had charted out, which is to bring about a synthesis between the Pratyabhijñā, the Krama and the Kaula systems.

THE ESSENTIALS OF TRIKA

The fundamental concern of Trika Śaivism is identical with the aim and purpose of all Indian schools of thought, which is to find out as to what constitutes human condition in its empirical phase and what is the ultimate destiny of that which is create, particularly of beings who are known as humans. What this basic concern of Indian thought explains is this: It is soteriology which constitutes the essence of Indian religiosity as well as of philosophical thought.

The Trika as a religious denomination is Tāntric in orientation and has adopted such Tāntric methods which it considers to be conducive for effecting the soteric liberation in terms of which freedom from the phenomenal bondage is experienced by submerging, through the process of introversion, into the inner subjectivity which is said to be identical with undifferentiated consciousness. As a school of philosophy, it establishes the principle of *recognition* (*pratyabhijñā*) through which the particular is subsumed by the universal. It was Somānanda who in his philosophic treatise, the *Śivadṛṣṭi,* laid down the basic framework upon which the entire superstructure of the Doctrine of Recognition is built.

The aim of the theory of Recognition is not simply to sharpen the intellectual faculty of the individual, but to deliver him from the limitations which his phenomenality imposes upon him and which, within the Trika framework, is spoken of as bondage. The aim, therefore, is through and through soteriological. It is within the soteric context that the Doctrine of Recognition provides the necessary means and methods that enable an individual to arrive at the ultimate goal of liberation. The means and methods are so structured as would penetrate the layers of ignorance,[92] as it is on account of ignorance that an individual experiences distinctions, which result in such experiences that are finite and limited. In the language of Trika the experience of limitation is equivalent to an unfreedom of bondage.

Although the Trika theory of Recognition, like the Advaita of Śaṁkara, is non-dualistic, yet it differs from the latter on the fundamental question of the nature of Reality. The Advaita Vedānta upholds that everything disappears in the ultimate unity of Reality at the time when a yogī experiences the ultimacy of non-difference. The proposition of the Advaita Vedānta that everything disapears upon the experience of unity is not acceptable to the followers of the Trika. For them nothing disappears at the time of the experience of unity; rather both unity and diversity are cognized within a perspective that is absolutely correct. What it means is this: Everything is recognized what it is, which, within the Trika context, means that everything is Śiva, or rather Śiva is everything. In recognizing the ontic status of an entity as being identical with Śiva means that there is no involvement of any form of negation. This is not the case with Advaita Vedānta, as no experience of unity is possible unless duality is negated.

It is the doctrine of negation of Advaita Vedānta which is responsible in giving rise to an another doctrine, namely, the doctrine of illusion (*māyāvāda*). The purpose of this doctrine is to uphold that the empirical entities exist, but they exist illusorily. The world we experience and encounter is ontically unreal on account of it being illusory. The world as illusion is linked to the epistemic illusion of perceiving, in the pitch darkness of the night, mistakenly the rope as a snake. The illusory nature of the snake is known only when rope is perceived as a rope. It is upon the negation of the snake, which occurs upon the disappearance of darkness due to light, that the real nature of the rope is known. Similarly the world, on account of ignorance, is seen to be real, which in fact is as illusory as is the snake upon the rope. The world as illusion is known upon realizing that *brahman* alone is real, and everything apart from *brahman* is either a construction of the mind or a mere linguistic fabrication (*prapañca*). This Vedāntic view is not at all acceptable to the adherents of the Trika. The Trika, instead, upholds that the experience of unity terminates in the true understanding of the facts of experience, and therefore no experience of negation either ontic or epistemic is involved.

The theory is termed as Recognition on account of it enabling an individual to an ontic experience or recognition in terms of which identity with Śiva is realized, which means that the individual being essentially is Śiva, which, within the Trika conceptual framework, means that the individual is nothing but the supreme I-consciousness, which is said to be the nature of Reality. The Doctrine of Recognition, thus, involves itself in integrating the various states of consciousness into a single whole. The Doctrine of Recognition also follows a methodology of reasoning whereby the states of consciousness are unified within the Primal Consciousness.

The basic experience which an individual has of himself, according to Trika, is that of limitation of will, which tells us that phenomenality gives rise to such obstructions or impediments whereby freedom is transformed into unfreedom. To the extent the individual being remains tied to his indviduality, to that extent he will suffer from the lack of freedom. The state of unfreedom comes to be on account of obstructions that do not allow consciousness to display its absolute splendour. The individual is unable to exercise his freedom or the power of will (*icchā-śakti*) to the extent the self-shining nature of consciousness remains concealed under the layers of impurities. Likewise the self knows not its essential nature insofar as its shining nature is covered by ignorance. It is, thus, ignorance, or, should we say, impurities, which impose limitations upon the individual being both in terms of self-recognition and the power of will.[93]

To escape from the impact of ignorance and of impurities, there is thus a need for such a method whereby an individual would know what he essentially is, which, according to the Trika, means the realization of one's divine nature. The philosophy of Recognition, as a soteric method, attempts at leading the individual to the goal which it thinks to be ultimate. Mere philosophic reasoning, according to Trika, is not sufficient for arriving at the ultimate soteric goal of freedom. As a religious system of praxis, the Trika adheres to the view that the goal of liberation will remain unrealizable unless an individual undergoes certain initiatory rites, as it is in and through them that an individual is empowered of reaching the goal of freedom. It is, moreover, through the power of initiation that both ignorance and impurities are removed, and upon their removal the individual is graced with self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*).[94]

REFERENCES

1. J.C. Chatterjee, *Kashmir Śaivism* (Srinagar, 1918), pp. 1-2.
2. While the various Tāntric schools in Kashmir were either dualistic or non-dualistic, it was the endeavour of Abhinavagupta to interpret the differing ideological standpoints of Tantrism in such as manner as would terminate in the theistically-oriented monism of Trika. The Trika is theistic in the sense that its Absolute is not as impersonal or passive as is the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. The Absolute of the Trika philosophy is as active and personal as is the personal God of theism. At the same time the Trika philosophy interprets its understanding of the Absolute in monistic terms, as it believes in the idea of Reality that is non-different. In ontic terms it implies that no essential difference exists between the Absolute and multiple diversity that is constitutive of the world. Whatever differences one, experiences, at the empirical level, have only logical or epistemic significance. Since Reality is one and indentical, so it means that the experience of difference cannot be given the status of the real. This idea of Reality, in the context of differing religious ideologies, would mean that the views which do not subscribe to the Trika monism, have to be treated as containing partial truths, which means that these truths, in comparison to the monistic truths of Trika, are of inferior quality. Religiously speaking, it means that these partial truths are only indicating the way towards the full revelation, which is contained in such Trika revelatory texts that have a non-dualistic ontology. Accordingly writes Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka* (hereafter cited as *TĀ),* 35.26-27, 30-32, the following: "All the various traditions, be they those of the worldly sciences (*laukika*), the Vedic, the Sāṁkhya, Yoga, the Vaiṣṇava (Pañcarātra), Buddhist, Jain, the treatises on logic and grammar, dualist Śaivism, Tantras and those of the worshippers of the Goddess (Śākta),

etc., are all born, according to the *Svacchandatantra,* from the (five) Brahmās, in their various forms, as Sadyojyoti (and the faces of Sadāśiva). . . . There is, therefore, only one tradition and all is based upon it, starting from the popular doctrines, to those of the Vaiṣṇavas and Buddhists upto those of the Śaivas. The ultimate goal of this (tradition) is the abode known as Trika which, because it is present in all things, is undivided and uninterrupted, is called Kula. Just as in all the limbs of the body, whether superior or inferior, there is but one life, just so is Trika present in all things as scriptures declare." [See also *Svacchandatantra* (hereinafter cited as *Sv.t.*), 8.28-31; 11.44-45, 179-82.]

3. *TĀ,* 1.124.
4. Ibid., 1.169.
5. Ibid., 9.74-75.
6. *Mahārthamañjarī* (hereinafter cited as *MM*), 13.
7. Concerning the canonical status of the various Śaiva scriptures, see Mark S.G. Dyczkowaski, *Canon of the Śaivāgamas and the Kubjikā Tantras of the Western Kaula Tradition* (Albany, 1987), pp. 101-2.
8. *Spandakārikā* (hereinafter cited as *Sp.kā.*), 26-27.
9. *Śivasūtra* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.*), 3.27.
10. *TĀ,* 36-381-88.
11. *Śivadṛṣṭi* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.Dṛ.*), 7.220-21.
12. *Nīlamata Purāṇa* (hereinafter cited as *Nī.Pu.*), 31, 50, 65-67.
13. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (hereinafter cited as *RT*), 1.25-27.
14. Ibid., 1.183.
15. Ibid., 1.177-78.
16. The ten dualistic Āgamic texts are the *Kāmaja, Yogaja, Cintya, Maukuṭa, Aṁśumat, Dīpta, Kāraṇa, Ajita, Sūkṣma,* and *Sahasra.*
17. The eighteen dualistic-cum-non-dualistic Āgamic texts are the *Vijaya, Niśvāsa, Madgīta, Pārameśvara, Mukhabimba, Siddha, Santāna, Nārasiṁhaka, Candrāṁśu, Vīrbhadra, Āgneya, Svayambhuva, Visara, Raurava, Vimala, Kiraṇa, Lalita,* and *Saurabheya.*
18. Insofar as the monistic (*abheda*) Bhairavāgamas are concerned, they have been divided into eight groups, each group representing the eight Āgamic texts. Each group of texts have a specific name or nomenclature. The groups are the *Bhairava, Yāmala, Mata, Maṅgala, Cakrāṣṭaka, Bahurūpa, Vāgīśa,* and *Śikhāṣṭaka.*

    The texts that fall in the first group of eight are the *Svacchanda, Bhairava, Caṇḍa, Krodha, Unmatta, Asitāṅga, Mahocchuṣama,* and *Kapālīśa.*

    The second group of Yāmala-āgamas are the *Brahmayāmala, Viṣṇuyāmala, Svacchanda, Ruru, Ātharvaṅa, Rudra,* and *Vetāla.* One text in this group is missing, and its name is not known.

    The third group of texts, namely, of the Mata group, are the *Rakta, Lampaṭa, Lakṣmīmata, Mata, Cālikā, Piṅgala, Utphullaka,* and *Viśvādya.*

The fourth group of texts, which are known as the Maṅgala, are the *Picu Bhairavī, Tantra Bhairavī, Tata, Brāhmī Kalā, Vijayā, Candrā, Maṅgalā,* and the *Sarvamaṅgalā.*

The fifth group of Cakrāṣṭaka are the *Mantracakra, Varaṇacakra, Guhyacakra, Khacakra, Śakticakra, Kalācakra, Binducakra,* and the *Nādacakra.*

The sixth group of Āgamic texts are the *Andhaka, Rurubheda, Aja, Mūla, Varṇabhaṇṭha, Viḍaṅga, Mātṛrodana,* and the *Jvālin.*

Insofar as the texts of the seventh group, namely, of the Vāgīśa group, are concerned, they are *Bhairavī, Citṛkā, Haṁsā, Kadambikā, Hṛllekhā, Candralekhā, Vidyullekhā,* and the *Vidyumat.*

The texts that belong to the last group are the *Bhairavī Śikhā, Vīṇā, Vīṇāmaṇi, Sammoha, Ḍāmara, Atharvaka, Kabandha,* and the *Śiraścheda.*

19. Concerning the five faces of Śiva, which are also known as "the pentad of *brahman*" (*brahmapañcaka*), see Moti Lal Pandit, in *Identity in Conflict* (New Delhi, 1998), p. 93, n. 29.
20. *TĀ*, 22.40-41.
21. *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, 1.160-66.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 1.149.
24. *TĀ*, 1.3, 7-21, 35; 2.81-86, 233.
25. A real *siddha,* according to Abhinavagupta, is the one who is in possession of the following qualities, and they are: (i) he should have control over the external phenomena, which, for all practical purposes, means that he must be in possession of occult powers that would distinguish him from that which is ordinary; (ii) he must be a devotee of Śiva, which qualifies him to be a religious teacher; (iii) he must be a man of great scholarship, which means that he, as a theologian, must have a thorough knowledge of sacred scriptures, and (iv) he must possess the capacity of performing miraculous deeds—and it is the possession of these supernatural powers which, empirically speaking, establish him as a Saint. As to why a *siddha* yogī is spoken of in superlative terms is because of the following: "The Awakened (yogī) is one in whom consciousness of his true unobscured nature has dawned. He has cut through the knot so hard (to unravel) of the notion of embodied egoity with the sword of wisdom (*prajñā*) sharpened on the excellent whetstone of practice, (applied) according to (our) declared teaching. He alone, recalling to mind (his authentic state of consciousness), is capable of *recognizing* (this truth)." Rājānaka Rāma, *Spandakārikāvṛtti* (hereinafter cited as *Sp.Kā.Vṛ.*), p. 101.
26. *Sp.Kā.Vṛ.*, p. 160.
27. *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* (hereinafter cited as *ĪPV*), pp. 209-12.
28. *Tantrasāra* (hereinafter cited as *T.Sā.*), p. 9.
29. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 2.55-56.
30. Ibid., 2.84-86a.

31. *TĀ,* 6.9-10; 9.65-66, 139; *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* (hereinafter cited as *IP*), 2.2.6.
32. *Tantrālokaviveka* (hereinafter cited as *TĀV*), 4.50. In a number of Tāntric texts are these divinized energies mentioned. In the *TĀ* (6.56-57) Vāma is seen to be that energy by the power of which the manifestation of the universe is actualized, and accordingly is said to be the controller of all such creatures who wander in the *saṁsāra* of rebirth. Jyeṣṭhā energy, as the controller of those who have attained the state of wisdom, is said to be the epitome of Śivahood, and so is considered to be the eldest (*jyeṣṭhā*) of the three. Insofar as Raudrī energy is concerned, it is said to be the power which destroys suffering, which means that it is in and through this divinity that all the karmic consequences are brought to an end. As such Raudrī is viewed as the controller of those who seek salvific enlightenment or wisdom.
33. Rāghavabhaṭṭa in his commentary on the *Śāradātilaka,* endeavours at finding the correspondence between the three divinities, the three powers of Śiva, and the three luminous elements as well as the three phonemes *a, u,* and *ṁ* of the *mantra OṀ.*
34. Concerning the origin of the *Śivasūtra,* there are various differing accounts. One of them is that of Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, which is believed to be much more reliable than the other accounts. According Kallaṭa, Vasugupta is said to have had a dream in which Śiva appeared to him, and thereby revealed the verses of the text. (See the commentary of Kallaṭa on the *Spandakārikā* where we read the following: *dṛbdham Mahādevagirau maheśasvapnopadiṣṭācchiva sūtrasindhoḥ.*) In addition to this account of Kallaṭa, there are the accounts of Rājānaka Rāma, Bhagavadutpala and Bhāskara. The first two speak about the origins of the *Śivasūtra* in their commentaries on the *Spandakārikā,* whereas the latter writes about it in his commentary on the *Śivasūtra* itself. (See *Spandakārikāvṛtti* [hereinafter cited as *Sp.Kā.Vṛ.*], p. 165; *Spandanirṇaya* [*Sp.Nr.*], p.1, and *Śivasūtravārttika* [hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.Vā.*], p. 2). All the three authors are of the opinion that the text of *Śivasūtra* was originally composed by Śiva himself, and Vasugupta just received the text on Mahādeva mountain. In what manner did Vasugupta receive the text on Mahādeva mountain is a question that needs an answer. In reply to this question our authors maintain that Vasugupta learnt the text from a Siddha.

    In contrast to the above views, we have the view of Kṣemarāja. Kṣemarāja, in the very beginning of his commentary on the *Śivasūtra,* tells us that Vasugupta as a spiritual teacher (*guru*) lived on Mahādeva mountain. He further tells us that Śiva appeared in a dream to Vasugupta, and told him that there is a boulder on the mountain upon which is inscribed the secret lore. According the instructions he received in the dream, Vasugupta went to the designated place. By touching the boulder, it miraculously rolled, and found the text of the *Śivasūtra* inscribed upon it. (Cf., *Śivasūtravimarśinī* [hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.Vi.*], pp. 4-5; (*Sp.Nr.*, pp. 1-2, 76). It is this tradition, as initiated by Kṣemarāja, which is commonly believed by the Śaivites of Kashmir. The rock is still extant on the mountain.

35. See Abhinavagupta on *MVV*.
36. *TĀ*, 36.381-88.
37. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 2.12, 118-19; 3.12; 7.1.
38. *RT*, 5.66.
39. It is difficult to tell as to whether the text was composed by Vasugupta or by his disciple Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa. It seems that Kallaṭa learnt the text from his teacher, and subsequently gave it the present shape. Kallaṭa also wrote a commentary on it, which is known as the *Spandasarvasva*, or the *Essence of Vibration*. This commentary is generally known as *Vṛtti*, which is a common term for such commentaries that are short and brief and confine themselves to word for word explanation.

    As to why the text is called the *Spandakārikā* is because it imparts, according to Kṣemarāja, that transcendental knowledge which tells us that one's own essential nature is non-different from Śiva, who is seen as the pulsing radiance (*sphurattā*) of consciousness, and it is this effulgent radiance which is considered to be the energy of its vibration (*spanda-śakti*) (cf., *Sp.Nr.*, p.1). Likewise Rājānaka Rāma tells us that the text has been given this title on account of its concern with the doctrine of Spanda. And the Spanda is seen as the subtle vibration of one's essential nature (*svabhāva*) as well as the highest power of consciousness. Within the Tāntric framework *śakti* is seen as the innate nature (*dharma*) of God (cf., *Sp.Kā.Vi.*, p.14). This text, thus, holds an important position within the Trika.
40. *Śaṁkara-digvijaya*, 16.54-80.
41. K.C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta* (Varanasi, 1963), p. 143. Charles Eliot has this to say concerning Kashmir Śaivism: "In Kashmir it was chiefly philosophic, in the Dravidian countries chiefly religious. In the south it (i.e., Śaivism) calls on God to help the sinner out of the mire, whereas the school of Kashmir, especially in its later development, resembles the doctrines of Śaṁkara, though its terminology is its own." *Hinduism and Buddhism* (London, 1921), vol. II, p. 224.
42. K.N. Bamzai, *History of Kashmir* (Delhi, 1962), p. 246.
43. R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 129.
44. Ibid., p. 130.
45. See Madhusudan Kaul Śāstrī's Introduction to *Ś.Dṛ.*, p. iii.
46. R.G. Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 129.
47. See Kṣemarāja's *Ś.Sū.Vi.*, p. 3.
48. Bhāskara, *Śivasūtravārttikā* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.Vā.*)., 3-5.
49. See above note 19.

50. This Āgama is no more available.
51. See *Sp.Nṛ.*
52. See *Tantrālokaviveka* (hereinafter cited as *TĀV*), 1.257.
53. *TĀ*, 1.243.
54. *RT*, 5.66.
55. In the recension of Bhāskara are to be found 79 *sūtras*, whereas Kṣemarāja's recension has 77 *sūtras*. The difference lies in the fact that one *sūtra* has been divided into two, and that the extra one is missing in the recension of Kṣemarāja. The variant versions in the two recensions are the following:

    1. *Śivasūtra* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.*), 1.13: Bhāskara: *icchāśaktitamā kumārī;* Kṣemarāja: *icchāśaktirumākumārī.*

    2. *Ś.Sū.*, 1.16 and 1.17: Bhāskara: *śuddhatattvasaṁdhānād vā; svapadaśaktiḥ.* Kṣemarāja reads both the *sūtras* together thus: *śuddhatattva-saṁdhānād vāpaśuśaktiḥ.*

    3. *Ś.Sū.*, 2.4: Bhāskara: *garbhe cittavikāso viśiṣṭ' vidyāsvapnah.* Although Kṣemarāja's version differs slightly from that of Bhāskara, but the meaning he ascribes to it is radically different: *garbhe cittavikāso' viśiṣṭavidyāsvapnaḥ.*

    4. *Ś.Sū.*, 3.14: This *sūtra* is not to be found in Kṣemarāja's version.

    5. *Ś.Sū.*, 3.19: Bhāskara: *vidyāvināśe janmavināśaḥ.* Kṣemarāja: *vidyāvināśe janmavināśaḥ.*

    6. *Ś.Sū.*, 3.23 and 3.24: the order of *sūtras* is reversed in the recension of Kṣemarāja.

    7. *Ś.Sū.*, 3.34: Bhāskara: *sukhāsukhayar bahirmananam.* Kṣemarāja: *sukhaduḥkhayor bahirmananam.*
56. There are two traditional accounts concerning the authorship of *Spandakārikā:* one account is that of Utpala Vaiṣṇava, and according to this account the real author of the text is none other than Kallaṭa. The other traditional account is that of Kṣemarāja, which believes Vasugupta to be the author of the text. See Kṣemarāja, *Sp.Nr.*, v. 1.
57. J.C. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 37.
58. We know that Kallaṭa lived during the reign of Avantivarman (AD 855-83); and in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (*RT*, 5.66) he is referred to as a *siddha.*It means that Kallaṭa must have lived during the last half of the ninth century.
59. Cf., J.C. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 37.
60. In the published edition of *Vivṛti* the author is referred to as Rāmakaṇṭhācārya, whereas in the colophons at the end of each section the author is called as Rājānakaśrīrāma. (See *Sp.Kā.Vi.*, pp. 54, 84, 93, 168.)
61. It is this name which is given in many manuscripts of the text.
62. It is what Kalhaṇa writes in his *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (5.86) concerning Kallaṭa: "In the time of Avantivarman, the illustrious Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa and other holy men (*siddha*) descended to the earth for the benefit of the people."
63. From this it follows that Bhāskara's commentary is prior to that of

Kṣemarāja.

64. See *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* (hereinafter cited as *ĪPVV*), II, pp. 301 and 328; ibid., III, p. 388. See also *Sp.Kā.Vi.*, p. 40; *Sp.Pra.*, p. 33. See Yogarāja on *Paramārthasāra* (hereinafter cited as *PS*), p. 103.
65. *TĀ*, 12.414.
66. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 5.219. There is a very popular verse which every Kashmiri Hindu recites every morning and evening and which, in part, has been quoted by Somānanda. As to what the source of the verse is, we know nothing. The verse runs like this: *Śivo dātā śivo bhoktā śivaḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat/ Śivo yajati yajñaśca yaḥ śivaḥ soham eva hi.*
67. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 3.11.
68. *MVV*, 1.23; 2.42.
69. *Ś.Dṛ.*; 7.109-14.
70. Ibid., 7.116-20.
71. Ibid., 7.121.
72. *Parātriśikāvivaraṇa* (hereinafter cited as *PTV*), 282.
73. See *TĀ*, *āhnika* 37.
74. See Maheśvarānanda's *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, *ĪPV*, 1.3.
75. Madhurāja Yogin, *Śāstra Parāmarśa*, vv. 7-8.
76. Abhinavagupta, *Bodhapañcadaśikā*, v. 16; see also *MVV*, 36.
77. *MVV*, 2.
78. *TĀ*, 1.42; see *PTV*, 277.
79. Ibid., 1.24.
80. *TĀV*, 22.433.
81. *PS*, 198.
82. *Bhagavadgītā* (hereinafter cited as *Bh.G.*), concl. v. 2.
83. *TĀV*, 12.428-34.
84. Ibid., 12.490.
85. *MM*, 202.
86. Ibid., 1.
87. Ibid., 2, 6.
88. Ibid., 88: *anena śrī mahārtha trika darśanayoḥ anyonyaṁ nātyantam bhedapratheti vyākhyātam.*
89. Ibid., 7.
90. Ibid., 177: *puṣpe gandhastile tailaṁ dehe jivo jalemṛtam/yathā tathaiva śastraṇām kulamantaḥ pratiṣṭhitam.*
91. Ibid., 152.
92. *ĪPV*, 1.35.
93. *TĀ*, 1.55; *ĪPV*, 1.20-21.
94. *TĀ*, 1.80.

CHAPTER 2

Tāntric Conceptual Background

The esoteric ethos of Tāntric religious spirituality is difficult to pursue unless we have a complete grasp as to what constitutes its text and context. The esoteric text of Tantrism is characterized by such religious elements and symbols which, for most of the time, are not its own creation, but have been borrowed from other religious traditions that were existing in India at the time of its emergence. It is the assimilative spirit which marks the uniqueness of Tantrism, and thereby its text also. The diverse elements that it has appropriated into itself do not seem to have achieved a logical consistency on account of them being dialectically opposed to each other. How far the contrasting images of Reality have been synthesized in the higher unity of thought and praxis will be known upon discussing the context that facilitated the arising of Tāntric text. It is within the context of contrasting images that the hermeneutical key for understanding Reality as Śiva and Śakti may be discovered. In order to have some feel of Tāntric esoterism, we will need to have some grasp of the historical and conceptual background of Tantrism. Let us, therefore, have a brief look at those elements that have been the backbone of Tāntric ideology and praxis.

HISTORICAL BEGINNING

It is a sad fact of history that the Indologists have completely neglected the study of Tantrism.[1] Instead they have paid much attention to the study of Upaniṣads and the allied schools of thought. Whatever has so far been published on the subject of Tantrism is of popular vintage, and therefore unreliable. The most authentic studies that have so far been carried out are far and few.[2] We are still dependent for knowing what Tantrism is and is-not upon the not-so-reliable studies of Sir John Woodroffe. The credit, however, goes to him for having pioneered the

Tāntric research at a time when it was considered not so rewarding.

As to why this esoteric and assimilative religious movement, which seems to have emerged as a full-fledged religious movement during the fourth and fifth centuries AD,[3] was given the nomenclature of *tantra* is not known to us at this time. What, however, is certain is that Tantrism seems to have spread all over India by sixth century. Upon gaining the acceptance both among the laity and religious elite, Tantrism thereby was able to influence the imagination of the people to the extent that no branch of human knowledge could escape its impact. Even well-established religions like Jainism, Buddhism and Brāhmanism could not escape the influence of Tantrism. The emergence of Tantrism within Hinduism and Buddhism has led many scholars, depending upon one's predisposition, to ascribe its origin either to Hindu or Buddhist milieu.[4]

The context that seems to have facilitated the emergence of Tantrism as a new salvific revelation for the present Dark Age (*kaliyuga*) was, on the one hand, the fossilization of Brāhmanism and, on the other, the emergence of Mahāyāna liberalism. Brāhmanism had reduced itself to a rigid system of caste in which the people at the lower wrung of social hierarchy had no access to religious salvation. Brāhmanism also had become so abstruse intellectually that only the elite of society had the leisure and means of engaging in abstract studies which had no relevance to the actual experiences of life in the world. It is within this context of social and religious degeneration that the emergence of Tantrism has to be viewed as a kind of antidote against the ills from which people seem to have been suffering. Doing away with religious and social restrictions, Tantrism was able to win the hearts of people by making its revelation available to everyone.

Tantrism as a new revelation may be seen as a new alternative vis-à-vis the old revelation of the Vedas and of the Upaniṣads. The unique aspect of this new revelation, as opposed to the old one, is its esoterism. While differentiating itself from the Vedic revelation, Tantrism did not, however, throw away the Vedic tradition wholesale. It appropriated into itself such elements which we now call *tāntric,* and which enabled people to accept it as a genuine revelation. It is this dual approach which is one of the unique features of Tantrism. While assimilating the opposing religious elements from diverse traditions, Tantrism somehow tries to resolve the tension, which the conflicting images give rise to, in the undifferentiated unity of the whole. The dialectical tension, rather, is used creatively to explain the process of mainfestation and resorption of that which emerges and passes away. It is the symbol of *emission* which explains the cosmic manifestation, whereas the image of *retention* explains the process of resorption. Both these outward and inward movements of Reality are conceptualized by making use of the male and female principles, which, at the popular level of religious imagination, are represented by Śiva and Śakti. These two opposing movements within Reality have been unified in the person of Śiva who is seen both as an ascetic yogī as well as a sensual debauch (*bhogī*). These contrasting images of Śiva are best examplified by an iconic figure that has been found in the Indus. In this figure Śiva is shown as being in deep meditation with a penis that is erect. The erect penis, while representing the maleness of God, is made to expalin simultaneously both chastity and eroticism of Śiva. In making use of such contrasting and conflicting images, Tantrism thereby endeavours to explain the nature of Reality both in abstract and anthropomorhpic terms. It is by reducing the most abstract to the level of mythos that Tantrism was enabled to give rise to what is called the gnostic esoterism.

In using the contrasting, and thereby conflicting, images as hermeneutical devices, Tantrism may, thus, be seen as adhering to a philosophic standpoint which cherishes logical inconsistency as being the essence of its esoterism. Whatever non-rational elements are found at the level of thought, they are, as it were, subsumed in the mythic unity of non-thought. It is in transcending the rational process of thought in which Tāntric mystical esoterism finds its autonomy. To the extent we remain confined to the realm of thought, to that extent we shall remain bound to our natural, i.e., human condition. It is a tension between irreconcilables, which, through the process of esoteric praxis, is overcome by transcending the human condition.[4]

It is not only the male aspect of Reality as Śiva that is explained in terms of contrasting images. Equally is the female aspect of Reality as Śakti explained in terms of such images that often generate conflict. The Mother Goddes is not only the source of life, but as Kālī is seen to be the destroyer of that which she has generated or emitted out of her womb. She is not only the mother, the symbol of sacrifice and love, but also a woman, the symbol of sensual attraction, which correspond to Śiva as *yogī* and *bhogī*. For a *tāntrika* these contradictory descriptions of Reality as Śiva and Śakti do not unsettle him mentally. As he thinks in mythic terms, so everything is possible, and that means no clear distinction exists between what is true and what is false. The ascription of dual roles to both Śiva and Śakti have been interpreted as being equivalent to divine play (*līlā*). The dualities, whether human or divine, shall be experienced to the extent we remain subject to the transcendent illusion or ignorance (*māyā, avidyā*). Upon the negation of this illusion comes the realization for a *tāntrika* which tells him that Reality is neither male nor female, neither Śiva nor Śakti, but a great mass of undifferentiated Consciousness.

The esoteric revelation of Tantrism must never be approached from a rational perspective, as such an approach would be unable in unveiling the inner essence of Tantrism. The inner core of Tāntric esoterism can be grasped if we approach it with its own hermeneutical method—and that means the decoding of the Tāntric twilight language in which the new revelation of salvation for this age is concealed. This salvific revelation, say the *tāntrikas,* has initially been revealed to the perfect beings (*siddhas*)[5] who understood as to what kind of knowledge needs to be imparted to the people of the Degenerate Age. It is, thus, the *siddha* who is said to be in possession of salvific revelation, and so he alone knows the hidden essence of revelation which is meant to lead people to the ultimate soteriological goal of liberation. As the teaching is secret, so a *tāntrika* is forbidden to disclose the esoteric core of Tāntric esoterism. A *tāntrika* alone knows as to what constitutes the heart of its esoterism.

It is through initiation (*dīkṣā*) that one attains the status of a *tāntrika,* and thereby becomes qualified for gaining access to Tāntric esoterism. While the teacher (*guru*) discloses the secret lore to the disciple, the disciple in turn, upon attaining the status of a teacher, gains the authority of imparting the secret knowledge that he has received from his teacher to his own disciples. In this manner is given rise to what is known as a spiritual lineage or tradition (*kula*). It is within the confines of various lineages that the Tāntric esoterism is passed on from one generation to another. It is through these lineages that continuity concerning the esoteric dimension of the teachings is maintained. It is the secret revelation of the *siddhas* that is to be found in the sacred Tāntric texts called either Tantras or Āgamas, and so constitute accordingly the Tāntric Canon.[6]

REALITY AS BI-POLAR

From the above discussion it must be clear that the Tāntric idea of Reality as consisting of a bi-polar dialectic goes back to the pre-history of Indus. Over a long period of time these ideas became part and parcel of both Hinduism and Buddhism. The Tāntric mythic concept of maleness and of femaleness of Reality is to be found in the sacred texts of the Hindus, namely, the Vedas. What, however, concerns us here is the unexpected presence of the Mother Goddess, during the first and second centuries of our era, in the Mahāyāna texts as Prajñāpāramitā and Tārā, the former a creation of the metaphysicians representing the Supreme Wisdom, whereas the latter embodying the primitive spirit of humankind. The Goddess, as the symbol of womanhood, is seen as representing both wisdom and power. Woman also came to be seen as symbolizing the degenerate condition of the fallen man. It is her sexuality which ensnares man in the trap of carnality. But woman as Mother liberates man by feeding him with the nectar of immortality. It is the conceptuality of woman which is at the heart of Tāntric revelation. Woman as Tārā or Durgā carry her childern in the boat of motherhood to the other side of the shore, i.e., to liberation.

It is as a symbol of power (*śakti*) and of wisdom (*prajñā*) that Tantrism looks at the Goddess as the ultimate soteriological refuge as well as the means of reaching this refuge. On account of this central role of the Goddess in Tantrism, many scholars, though erroneously, have presumed that Tantrism must be of foreign origin. These scholars are of the view that the worship of the Goddess is completely foreign to the Indian ethos. Since the Goddess is at the heart of Tantrism, so Tantrism as a religion must have come from some foreign country. It is this view of Tantrism as being identical with Śakti that led H.P. Śāstrī to declare that "the Tantras came from outside India. Most probably (they) came with the Magi Priests of the Scythians."[7] This thesis of Śāstrī is supported by Bhattacharya when he says that "the introduction of Śakti-worship in religion is so un-Indian that we are constrained to admit it as external or foreign influence."[8]

This condemnation of Śāktism, and thereby of Tantrism, as being of foreign origin does injustice to historical evidence. It is absolutely wrong to identify Tantrism simply with the worship of Śakti or the female energy.[9] It is not Śakti alone which constitutes Tāntric esoterism. Rather it is the polar duality of Śiva and Śakti which conjointly make up the Tāntric ideology. It would also be wrong to identify Tantrism solely either with Śāktism or Śaivism.[10] Both Śāktism and Śaivism exist as independent religious denominations. The relationship that occurs between Śāktism, Śaivism and Tantrism is like that of "two intersecting but not coinciding circles."[11] There may be much in common between these religious denominations and Tantrism, but that does not mean that we should identify the latter with either Śāktism or Śaivism. The assertion, thus, that Tantrism is totally identical with Śāktism or Śaivism is unfounded.

Insofar as the assertion that Śāktism, or the worship of Śakti, is of foreign origin, there is not much substance to be found in it. All such elements which constitute Tantrism, including the element of *śakti,* are foreshadowed in some Vedic, and thereby Brāhmanic, rituals. Many sexually-oriented rituals are to be found in the *Ṛgveda.*[12] Not only sexual symbolism, or rituals associated with sexuality, are extant in the Vedic literature, but in abundance therein are to be found such Tāntric elements as, for example, sorcery, astrology, the ritual use of wine, the use of magic spells and charms, and the worship of semi-divine and divine beings.[13] There are nearly a dozen such elements in the *Ṛgveda* which concern themselves with magic, and its various variations, and this concern is repeated in the *Atharvaveda.*[14] The attainment of magical powers, within the Tāntric context, would be seen as one of the essential marks of a *siddha*—and Śiva would be transformed into a supreme magician who, on account of his magical powers, enacts the divine play of creation and dissolution. As perfection in the magical art of power is attainable by engaging in ascetical meditation in such places as cemeteries, so it is Śiva within Tantrism who, as a great ascetic, mostly lives either in the mountain caves or in places that are haunted by wild spirits. This aspect of Śiva would come to the fore in such closely related Tāntric sects as the Nāthas or Aghorīs.

As already pointed out, the Mother Goddess as Śakti plays a pivotal role in Tantrism. Its antecedents are not only to be found in the Indus, but also in the Vedic literature. It is true that the female deities are not given in the Vedic literature as much prominence as is given to the male ones, particularly in the early Vedic texts. Even though playing a lesser role than the male deities, there is, however, one predominant tendency to be found in the Vedic texts in terms of which feminine beauty as *apsaras,* or water nymphs, is given due consideration. It is on account of his magical powers that a long-haired ascetic (*muni*) is able to move on the path of *apsaras* and *gandharvas,* who are said to be the lovers of *apsaras.*[15] The Tāntric notion of the unity of the Real as consisting of the union of male and female and the idea that the female is present in the male is foreshadowed by a passage in the *Ṛgveda*[16] where Indra transforms himself into any form on account of his magical powers, namely, *māyā*—and *māyā* as power is identical with Śakti. This idea of *māyā* is repeated in the Upaniṣads.[17]

The magical powers of *māyā* has its basis in the Vedic concept of *mantra.* A *mantra* consists of certain syllables, and every syllable is but a construction of certain sounds. The mantric sounds are said to represent the *primal sound,* which is but the power of Reality itself. It is this primal sound which is said to be identical with the Goddess. It is through the process of ritual initiation that the sounds of a *mantra,* upon their utterance, are made casually efficacious, and thereby is realized the magical power. It is this magical power of primal sounds which a Siddha has perfected while leading an embodied existence. The origin of these mystical sounds may be traced in such non-meaning Vedic sounds as *svadha, svāha, vaṭ, phaṭ,* etc.[18]

This polarization of Reality into Śiva and Śakti is complementary to each other, as one apart from the other has no significance or meaning. While it is the principle of *śakti* which represents the female aspect of Reality, it is Śiva who represents the maleness of the Ultimate. As already pointed out, the antecedents of Śiva have been discovered in what is called the proto-Śiva of the Indus. In the Vedic literature it is Rudra who inheres in himself the main characteristics of the proto-Śiva of the Indus as well as of Hinduized Śiva.[19]

Whether in its Indus version or in its Vedic version, Śiva has always been shown as an ascetic yogī. Śiva, thus, represents that underground stream of spirituality which is occult and has close association with the introvertive techniques of Yoga. It is not only through ritual initiation that one attains occult powers, but also through the methods of introversion. The earliest Upaniṣad in which Śiva plays an important role is the *Śvetāśvatara* whose date of composition has been fixed either to fifth or sixth century BC.[20] In this text clear guidelines concerning the use of yogic techniques have been formulated. Also described are concentration and breath control.[21] It is even claimed that a yogī can become immortal if he follows the yogic path of introvesion.[22] This ascetical temper of Śiva as a yogī is given further push in the *Mahābhārata* where he is depicted as practising the yogic austerities in the caves of Himalaya. In Paurāṇic Hinduism Śiva is so mythicized that the borderline between myth and reality gets totally obliterated. Thus we have a Śiva who is a yogī, an ascetic, and at the same time given to eroticism. It is this multifaceted character of Śiva which one finds in Tāntric esoterism.

Tantrism is esoterism precisely because it relishes the language of paradoxes. Whatever is of the nature of paradox is hidden, beyond understanding, and therefore, from a rational perspective, absurd. This patadoxical nature of Śiva, and thereby of Tantrism, is explained by O'Flaherty thus:

> . . .the mediating principle that tends to resolve the contradictions is in most cases Śiva himself. Among the ascetics he is a libertine and among libertines an ascetic; conflicts which they cannot resolve, or can attempt to resolve only by compromises, he simply absorbs into himself and expresses in terms of other conflicts. Where there is excess, he opposes and controls it; where there is no action, he himself becomes excessively active. He himself emphasizes the aspect which is unexpected, inappropriate, shattering any attempt to achieve superficial reconciliation of the conflict through mere logical compromise. . . . The erotic ascetic is precisely such an 'abnormal' and 'anomalous' figure. Śiva is particularly able to mediate in this way because of his protean character; he is all things to all men. He merely brings to a head the extreme and therefore the least reconciliable aspects of the opposition which, although they may be resolved in various ways on the divine level, are almost never reconciled on the human level.[23]

These contradictory traits of Śiva are never resolved at the religious or human levels. *Tāntrikas* consciouly avoid of seeking any resolution of these contradictions through logical or rational processes of thought. Upon recognizing contradictions as pradoxes, the faculty of understanding gives up the process of judging the correctness or incorrectness of a statement. Suspension of judgement denotes of going beyond the pairs of thought. In transcending the conceptual opposites, there is neither good nor evil, neither ease nor pain. Whether it be Tāntric esoterism or any other, the aim is the abandonment of the judgemental process of thought. In terms of yogic awareness, it means to centre one's thoughts at that point which exists between two conscious moments, and that is pure vacuity. Just as all contradictions are resolved in the immensity of void, so by suspending the faculty of judgement one is expected to attain to a non-cognitive awareness in which the opposites are totally absent. It is the aim of Tāntric rituals as well as of meditative techniques to submerge in what technically is called the Sky of Consciousness (*cidākāśa*).[24]

There are various layers and levels of contradictions to be found in the mythology of Śiva. We cannot treat each layer in isolation from other layers. It is by looking holistically at the corpous of Śiva mythology that we shall gain some glimpse into the working of Tāntric esoterism. While dwelling upon the myth of cosmic creation, Kramrisch has this to say:

> The Father had broken the state of wholeness that existed before the fall of the seed. This state is beyond words. It is indescribable and inaccessible to the senses. It is neither 'non-being' nor 'being' (*Ṛgveda,* 10.129). But if that much can be said about it, it has also been said that it is 'nonbeing and

> being' (ibid., 10.5.7), and that out of nonbeing came being in the first age of the god (ibid., 10.72.2). It is then that the indefinable wholeness of the total absence or the total presence of both nonbeing and being appears to recede and to set up the screen on which are seen the large figures of gods and their actions. This state of 'neither nonbeing nor being', or simultaneously 'nonbeing and being' is not within the range of thought. It is a plenum that defies definition, for it has no limits. Yet it is not a chaos, 'the darkness covered by darkness', said to have existed before the beginning of the ordered universe (ibid., 10.129.3). In its precosmic, preconscious totality, everything is contained, including consciousness and nothingness. Metaphysically, it did cease when the cosmos came into existence, for it is not subject to time. Mythically, its wholeness has been injured. Mystically, its nameless plenum is inaccessible except in the state of *samādhi,* the final stage of yoga leading to *mokṣa,* the total release from all contingencies. Words like plenum, totality, and wholeness are used here merely as symbols of the Uncreate. Rudra, the guardian of the Uncreate, an undefinable transcendental plenum, avenged the infringement of that wholeness.[25]

Quite beautifully is explained by Kramrisch the real purport of myth. Myth always operates in non-time, although the events in it may take place in time. The *tāntrikas,* thus, find no contradiction in asserting that Śiva is both chaste and unchaste, prone to both good and evil. As the categories of rationality are inapplicable to Tāntric esoterism, so to say that it is through sexual indulgence (*bhoga*) that release (*mokṣa*) is attained is to put forth Tantrism, in contrast to Brāhmanism and Śramaṇism, as an alternative soteriological path which does not believe in the abandonment of joy of the senses. The seeds of this Tāntric view are to be found in the ithyphallic proto-Śiva of the Indus. While not disdaining the enjoyment of senses, the erect penis of Śiva simultaneously endeavours to attain the condition of chastity. This is what O'Flaherty has to say concerning the ithyphallic condition of Śiva:

> The ithyphallic condition has been attributed by some not to periapism but to the Tāntric ritual of seminal retention. To a certain extent this technique may be considered a manifestation of yogic chastity, but Śiva's raised *liṅga* is symbolic of the power to spill the seed as well as to retain it.[26]

This interpretation of the *liṅga* as representing the process of emission and retention of semen corresponds to the Tāntric view of Reality as being polar when engaged in the activity of manifestation and resorption of that which has been emitted. It is Śiva and Śakti who, upon their couplation, emit the universe of which we are a part. The emission comes to be when the Couple, upon union, separate. The process of return or resorption of the universe begins when, during the moment of union, both the partners merge into the absolute union of oneness. The erect penis (*ūrdhvaretas*), within the Tāntric context, denotes the condition in which the seed is raised up but not spilled. This non-spilling of the seed symbolizes chastity of Śiva.[27] But then there is given rise to the universe, and this means that the seed has been spilled. Both these movements of seed being spilled and retained correspond to the dormancy as well as the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī. The spilling of the seed means that the Kuṇḍalinī has been atomized by being reduced to a state of total inertia. In this atomized condition Kuṇḍalinī resides in what is called the root-*cakra* at the base of the spinal column. Conversely speaking, the retention of semen represents the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī. Upon her arousal, she ascends upwards through the erect spinal cord, which may be equated to the erect penis. Upon reaching the thousand-petelled-lotus-*cakra* (*sāhasrāra),* which is located at the top of the head, Kuṇḍalinī not only is united with Śiva, but, because of her union with Śiva, spills out of herself the nectar of immortality (*soma).* Just as it is the erect penis which causes the ejection of semen, even so it is the erect spinal column that functions as a causal agency for the emission of nectar in the interior void of the skull. The arousal as well as the spilling of nectar of Kuṇḍalinī has an esoteric significance. It represents the inner ejaculation within the yogī when he realizes the state of absolute union of Śiva and Śakti. In practical terms it means that the orgasmic bliss is identical with the bliss that comes to be when the nectar of immortality is spilled by the Kuṇḍalinī. From this analysis it may be concluded that for a *tāntrika* the physical sexual union is a foretaste of the bliss of immortality, which comes to be when there is union of Śiva and Śakti.

The esoteric notion of gaining access, through the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī, to the immortal nectar became a religious obsession with the Siddhas and Nāthas, which are the offshoots of Tantrism. These new emergent Tāntric cults believed that they could gain the condition of immortality by perfecting the art of yogic alchemy. It was believed by them that the source of this nectar is nothing but the semen that is contained in the body. In order to retain the seminal fluid within the body, the Siddhas as well as the Nāthas devised such yogic techniques that were centered upon perfecting the deficiencies of the body. For them the aim was to attain the immortal condition of the body, which meant the state of Śivahood. Upon attaining to the state of Śivahood, the Siddhas thereby believed that they would be blessed with all such powers which have been ascribed to Śiva. What it meant was that they thought of themselves as being identical with God. It is this mad rush for supernatural powers which dominates the medieval esoterism in India.

What kind of yogic procedures did the Nāthas or Siddhas employ towards the soteriological goal of immortality? The yogic path they followed is known as *ulṭā-sādhanā* or the regressive method. Concerning this regressive method S.B. Dasgupta has this to say:

> The yoga practice of the Nātha Siddhas is *ulṭā* or regressive, firstly in the sense that it involves yogic processes which give a regressive or upward motion to the whole biological as well as psychological systems which in their ordinary nature possess a downward tendency, and in the sense that such yogic practices lead the Siddha to his original ultimate nature as the immortal Being in his perfect or divine body.[28]

The search of the Siddha for the elusive immortal body is centered upon one point, which is to escape death. Death can be overcome only if somehow the body is transformed into an immortal entity. This concern for the well-being of the body gave rise to what is called the *kāya-sādhanā* or the culture of the body. For a Siddha death could be postponed *ab libitum* by recharging and restrengthening the body by transforming the seminal fluid into an immortal elixir. Also death could be conquered by de-materializing the body. It is within this context that the alchemy of the Siddhas may be evaluated.

The purpose of the *ulṭā-sādhanā* is, thus, to attain such powers whereby the tentacles of death could be avoided either by transmuting the body into an immortal entity or by dematerializing it. In the former case one would be able to live in the world of the senses endlessly with a divine body, and in the case of the latter one would merge in the absolute glory of God. The method that the *ulṭā-sādhanā* employs towards this goal is that of introversion of consciousness as well as that of *prāṇāyāma*. In arresting the flow of breath, the Siddha yogī thereby endeavours at arresting the inflow and ouflow of air, which results in the arrest of the seminal fluid. For a Siddha the outflow of semen denotes the degeneration of the body. By retaining it within the body, he attempts at transmuting the seminal fluid into an *essence* (*rasa*). Upon transforming the seminal fluid into an immortal essence, the yogī thereby experiences its trickling down from the *moon* (*candra*) in the thousand-petalled-lotus-*cakra*—moon being the symbol of immortal nectar. Lest the immortal nectar may fall into the sun, the opposite of the moon, the yogī employs the method of *khecarī mudrā*. The sun symbolizes the nave, and the nectar must not be allowed to fall into the navel and get destroyed therein.

In whatever way esoterism, particularly of Tāntric variety, may be looked at, it becomes quite evident that the aim is not simply to confound people mentally, but to realize a condition of non-death. All the magical rituals and sexual symbols are meant to transcend the human condition, firstly, by suspending the rational faculties and secondly, by engaging in such bizarre rituals which signify non-human aspects of life. It is this regressive approach which is a unique feature of Tantrism. What may look irrational to an ordinary person is, for a *tāntrika,* quite rational. The ascription of irrational elements to Reality are intended to dazzle one's thinking, so that the content of contraries remains hidden. It is not only in splitting Reality into contraries in which the uniqueness of Tantrism lies; rather it is heightened at a higher scale when contraries are described in conflicting terms. Initially Reality is split into two contraries, namely, Śiva-Śakti. Whether we take Śiva or Śakti aspect of Reality into consideration, what we find is that each of them suffers from various layers of contrary natures. Śiva is both an ascetic and a bacchanal—and in this there seems to be no element of contradiction involved. Likewise Śakti is both a mother and a destroyer. It is this dialectic of contradiction that is at the heart of Tāntric esoterism. Kramrisch, when discussing Śiva mythology, has quite beautifully brought out this point:

> The myths of Śiva have many levels. They have also to be entered all at the same time, or else the total, multiple perspective of each is lost sight of. crazed beggar, saviour, necrophilliac, voluptuary, ascetic, he is each wholly on the plane where he acts, where on another plane he is Sadāśiva, the eternal Śiva, who lays out his presence in his five faces, of which the fifth, invisible in principle, is part of the *pañcamukha liṅga,* Śiva's concrete, monumental symbol.[29]

THE NATURE OF DIVINE BI-UNITY

The Tāntric notion of Reality as being identical with a twofold movement of emissional expansion (*vikāsa*) and contraction (*saṁkoca*) cannot be understood apart from its over-all metaphysic. One of the basic Tāntric concept is that Reality, in its absoluteness, is not simply light (*prakāśa*), but also consists of an innate dynamism and activity, which is said to be of the nature of agitation (*kṣobha*). This agitation may be compared to the flame that comes to be when friction is caused between two fire-sticks against each other. This dynamic aspect of Reality is known as self-apprehending or reflective awareness (*virmarśa*), which is equated with what is called vibration (*spanda*). Even in its non-dual state Reality, at least conceptually, is thought of in terms of a bi-polar unity, which, at the practical religious level, is made the foundation of Tāntric esoterism.

Utilizing a variety of concepts such as resonance (*nāda*), pulsation (*spanda*), reflective awareness (*vimarśa*), Tantrism thereby wants to establish that Reality is basically emittive in nature. This emissional character of Reality becomes operational when it, at the conceptual level, is divided into *prakāśa* and *vimarśa,* and at the religious level is anthropomorphized into Śiva amd Śakti, or what may be called the Divine Couple. When split into opposites, there occurs a friction on account of innate agitation or tension, and consequently, on account of this tension, there results the emission of the seed—and the seed is the symbol of the manifest cosmos. The universe is potentially contained within the seed, and upon the emission of the seed the manifest condition of that which is latent is actualized. This dynamic aspect of Reality as *spanda* is explained by Abhinavagupta thus:

> The nature of such a consciousness is its capacity for self-comprehension and because of this, there always arises a spontaneous sound (*dhvani*) which is termed as supreme, the great Heart. That self-consciousness in the Heart in which the entire universe, without remainder, is dissolved, present at the beginning and at the end of perception of objects, is called . . . the vibration (*spanda*), and more accurately, the universal vibration (*sāmānya-spanda*) and its nature is an overflowing in the Self. For that vibrating, which is a slight motion of a special kind, a unique vibrating light, is the wave of the ocean of consciousness, without which there is no consciousness at all. For the character of the ocean is that it is sometimes filled with waves and sometimes waveless. This consciousness is the essence of all. The insentient universe has consciousness as its essence, because its very foundation is dependent on that, and its essence is the great Heart.[30]

In using the images of ocean and of waves, Abhinavagupta thereby wants to show that what, at the empirical level, is experienced as different or contrary is, at the level of unity, subsumed in the non-dual unity of Reality. To the extent waves remain as waves, we shall always differentiate them from the ocean. But once waves subside in the calm waters of the ocean, there remains but the great mass of water, which we term as ocean. The waves as waves, however, have their source in the ocean. Apart from the ocean, they cannot exist. Likewise shall we experience contradictions as contradictions till we continue to see them apart from Reality.

The nature of Reality is said to consist of a great mass of consciousness, which is seen to be identical with our subjectivity, and is accordingly referred to as the Self (*ātman*).[31] This consciousness as an indivisible unity is equated with the unity of the ocean when resting in its stillness (*viśrānti*). This peaceful (*śānta*) aspect of Reality is termed as Light (*prakāśa*). As the ocean, even in its state of stillness, is never completely at rest, so equally consciousness is never still. To be totally still would mean death. It is the innate nature of consciousness to be active. This dynamism, as an opposite of rest, is termed as *spanda*. It is this polar opposition in terms of which the indivisible state of the Absolute is described. These two movements of rest and vibration, of expansion and contraction, constitute the essential nature of Reality.

One of the ways in which consciousness expresses its dynamism is through the process of knowing. Consciousness not only cognizes objects by going towards them, but it also cognizes itself by reflecting upon itself—and this activity of self-apprehension is called *vimarśa*. Were consciousness totally inert, it would be impossible for it to apprehend itself or objects that are out there. When two opposites come in contact with each other, the conflict that is given rise to becomes a creative source for the new emergence. Its cognitive activity with regard to objects may be termed as expressing the outgoing or expansive movement. Conversely, the movement of turning upon itself may be seen as representing the introversion of consciousness, and at the cosmic level it would denote the movement of resorption (*laya*).

This inner dynamism of Reality is encapsulated by what is known an inner resonance (*dhvani*), which is inaudible, and so has been linked to pulsation or reflection. There are some other terms which have been used to describe the active aspect of Reality, and these terms are *sphuraṇa, sphurita,* and *sphurattā,* meaning that which throbs, quivers, or trembles. The root of each of them is *sphu,* meaning 'to throb.' In addition to these meanings, the root also signifies that which flashes, glows, glistens, or gleams. What is it that glows or is of the nature of luminosity? That alone illumines which has light as its nature—and so consciousness, being of the nature of light, always glows. The objective realm is spoken of as being manifest because it reveals itself through the *light of consciousness*. Apart from this light of consciousness, we can never know the world. It will remain concealed in the abyss of darkness. It is this light which is seen as the substratum of that which is manifest. The Absolute as consciousness manifests itself as the cosmos on account it being identical with light, and it is this light which glows and flashes forth.

This description of Reality as being of the nature of light is made use of to explain the ultimate condition of a *tāntrika* yogī. When a yogī enters into what is called the condition of Bhairava,[32] he experiences within the emergence of light. In mystical terms this experience of light is termed an "an overflowing" (*uccalana*), which corresponds to the esoteric experience of the retention of the seed as well as to the spilling of the nectar of Kuṇḍalinī in the skull. The skull, thus, is the symbol from which one drinks the nectar of immortality, and Śiva and Devī wear around their necks a garland of skulls, denoting thereby their immortal state. Also overflowing can take place in that which is filled with such a creative intensity that it can hold it no more, and so lets it overflow.

Since Reality is never at rest, it means that it is always working towards the manifest. Initially this tendency towards the manifest emerges when there arises within the heart of Reality an inward hum or resonance. When the force of this hum builds up to the maximum, there is unleashed such a creative force which terminates in the bursting forth[33] of what is called the cosmos. This coming out of the cosmos from the divine seed may be linked to the bang-like sound which occurs upon the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī. In the case of the former the bursting of sound denotes the emergence of the universe, and thereby also the reduction of the infinite to the finite. The reduction of the infinite to finitude is explained in terms of Kuṇḍalinī being encaged in the root-*cakra*. In the case of the latter this ferocious sound denotes the releasing of Kuṇḍalinī from its atomized or finite condition. What for one is freedom is for the other unfreedom.

The agitational (*ghūrṇanā*) movement of consciousness, caused by innate vibration, is a double-edged sword in the sense that consciousness both projects itself outward as well as withdraws into itself. The external cognition of an object is possible when consciousness reaches to the object. Self-cognition comes to be when consciousness turns upon itself. At the cosmic level, the external movement denotes the self-manifestation of Reality as the universe, and the inward movement signifies the dissolution of the cosmos. This double movement is spoken of as the movement of expansion-contraction (*vikāsa-saṁkoca*), and with regard to yogic praxis this two-way movement denotes the opening-and-closing (*unmeṣa-nimeṣa*) of eyes. This double nature of *spanda* is described by Abhinavagupta thus:

> O Lady with beautiful hips! The Heart[34] is the subtle vibration of the triangle which consists of the incessant expansion and contraction of the three powers,[35] and it is the place of repose, the place of supreme bliss. This very

> Heart is the very self of Bhairava, of that which is of the essence of Bhairava, and of the blessed supreme Goddess who is inseparable and non-different from him. Now consciousness, which is formed of the Ultimate (*A*), vibrates with a seed vibration in the two extreme points of the first vowel (*A*);[36] two points whose nature is that of reposing in their own-nature. And because of that power of vibration, consciousness, which is composed of the essence of all, becomes, in the central point, the impulse towards the manifestation of the distinct and different cognition.[37]

The impulse within Reality to manifest itself as the variegated universe of objects exists on account of its innate vibratory nature. It is through cognition, which is the nature of the subject, that we come to know the manifest world, or, should we say, it is the illuminating light of consciousness which reveals the manifest condition of the universe. While revealing the manifest world, there is also a tendency of concealing that which is being revealed. Thus both knowledge and ignorance, expansion and contraction, opening and closing of eyes, emergence and resorption—all of them exist within Reality itself. Rather it is the very nature of Reality to contain within itself contrary natures or movements. For the Absolute the movement of expansion, which terminates in the emergence of the objective universe, denotes self-veiling, and thereby signifies the state of ignorance for Śiva as an atomized individual. Accordingly this outward movement of self-manifestation (*prapañca-spanda*) of Śiva is spoken of as being identical with the closing of eyelids (*nimīlana, nimeṣa*). When Reality rests in itself, or within its own supreme vibration (*pari-spanda*), it then operates in terms of self-revelation by unveiling that which had remained hidden, and so is said to be identical with the opening of eyelids (*unmīlana, unmeṣa*).

These two terms, *unmīlana* and *nimīlana*, denote specific yogic states. A yogī who has become a Siddha experiences complete absorption (*samāveśa*) as well as the cosmic manifestation and resorption in both *nimīlana* and *unmīlana* conditions. It matters little whether the Siddha yogī is in a waking state, in which case the eyes are open, or in the state of introversion, in which case the eyes remain closed. In either condition he remains in the state of *samādhi*. For the yogī *unmīlana-samādhi* also represents the experience which the outward movement of Śiva denotes. At the religious level it denotes that the yogī experiences the actual presence of Bhairava within the objective world which, prior to this state, is experienced as being distinct from oneself. Conversely, the *nimīlana-samādhi* expresses the transcendent experience of Śiva, which comes to be when consciousness, through introversion, submerges itself into Śiva. This *samādhi,* at the cosmic level, expresses the dissolution of the universe into one's own subjectivity, and thereby represents the movement of withdrawal. This double aspect of *samādhi* as opening and closing of eyes is explained in the following terms by Abhinavagupta:

> In the two conditions, the inner and the outer, there exists a vibration of consciousness whose nature is the three powers (of will, knowledge, and action), a vibration which is both universal and particular, which is always in the process of expanding and contracting because it so wishes to appear even though in reality it is beyond all expansion and contraction. He whose final aim is internal and whose vision is directed outwards attains the highest realization.[38]

The ultimate liberating condition that a yogī attains, on account of the practice of *unmīlana-samādhi* and *nimīlana-samādhi,* is esoterically spoken of as the state of *khecarī-mudrā* or *bhairava-mudrā.* There occurs in esoteric terms the spilling of the nectar in the skull, which terminates in the realization of the state of non-death. In epistemic terms the state of non-death denotes that the yogī recognizes that it is the essence of the Self which pervades that which is objective. In ontic terms the state denotes that the so-called external difference or objectivity is false. As everything is one and identical, the conceptual or cognitive differences, being false, are not of much consequence. The world, however, is not unreal like an oasis in a desert. It is real on account of it having its source in the self-emission of the Absolute.[39] Ontically everything is one, but conceptually or perceptually there is difference, and it will exist to the extent we see opposites as contraries and arrive at knowledge through the method of exclusion and contrast. It is the aim of the *tāntrikas* to transcend the dichotomous mode of understanding while also recognizing the need for polar opposites.

THE DIVINE DYAD: ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI

The contrasting images of Reality are given rise to on account of its vibratory nature. It is in terms of contrast and dialectical opposition, contend the *tāntrikas,* that we are able to have some grasp of Reality, which essentially otherwise is said to be non-conceptual, and therefore beyond the ken of the intellect. One of the contrasting images used by the *tāntrikas* concerning Reality is the use of anthropomorphic image of the Divine Couple, that is, Śiva and Śakti. In order to understand the dialectical polarity of Reality as Śiva and Śakti, it would be of help if the meaning of the term *dialectic* itself is clarified.

The term *dialectic* gains clarity in the context of the way we experience the world. Our experience of the world is characterized by *change,* and change denotes both instability and impermanence. That which changes suffers from finitude. To give an account of this change in logical terms, the method of dialectic is used.

The essential mark of the natural world is said to be change, and that which changes cannot occur by itself. There must be a principle by whose intervention change is actualized as a continuous process. And it is the principle of *dialectic* which brings about change in the natural order of seeming stability and solidity. The principle of dialectic itself is comprised of two opposite elements: thesis and antithesis. It is the opposition as well as the interaction between these two elements that brings about change when they give rise to a new synthesis. When thesis and antithesis, although opposed to each other, merge into each other through interaction, they thereby give rise to a new development, which is termed as change. In this way the principle of dialectic attempts to give a logical explanation of change that occurs in the natural world.

The principle of dialectic, within the context of Tantrism, is made use of to explain the process of appearance and disappearance of that which is manifest. In religious language change explains as to how the process of emanation/manifestation and dissolution/withdrawal of the world occurs. Existentially it means to find out as to what is the cause of birth and death, appearance and disappearance, and it also means that, upon the abandonment of previous state, which entails death, a new state is realized, which signifies birth. It is this double movement of emergence and abandonment that is the unique feature of change. It is this double movement of birth and death which Tantrism explains by making use of the anthropomorphic images of Śiva and Śakti.

How can the dialectical polarity be ascribed to Reality, which, according to Tantrism, is essentially non-dual (*tādātmya*) and one (*ekam*)? If polarity is innate to Reality, then we are ascribing change to it, which means that its essential unity stands destroyed. *Tāntrikas* say that Reality does not suffer from any change or modification in its ontic make up. Just as waves do not destroy the unity of the ocean, even so no change occurs within Reality even when it emits out of itself the manifest world. Whether this reasoning is able to solve the logical problem of change with regard to Reality is a matter that needs separate treatment.

As already pointed out above, *tāntrikas* speak of Reality as consisting of light (*prakāśa*) and self-awarencess (*vimarśa*), the former representing the aspect of stability and the latter that of dynamic change. These contrasting images of Reality as light and movement, as Śiva and Śakti, are resolved in the synthetic unity of oneness when both of them merge into each other. This synthesis of the opposites forms the ground for both unity and diversity or change. It is upon the attainment of synthesis that a new development is given rise to, which denotes change. While there is synthesis, there is simultaneously a bifurcation into opposites, which consititutes the process of emergence and change.[40]

By bifurcating the Absolute into a dialectic of opposites, the *tāntrikas* thereby make a contrast of Śiva with Śakti, the former representing the male principle, whereas the latter, the female principle. It is this dialectic of opposite principles which constitutes the Divine Dyad (*yāmala*) of Śiva and Śakti. Śakti, as the female counterpart of the male principle, is seen as being the power or energy (*śakti*) of Śiva. It is on account of this innate power that Śiva projects himself as this universe by emitting it out of itself. The principle of *śakti* is as innate to Śiva as coolness is to ice, heat to fire.[41] Thus the *tāntrikas* would say that in every male there exists a female.

The Absolute, say the *tāntrikas,* can be at least mentally grasped if it is bifurcated into a dialectic of opposites as Śiva and Śakti. This way of looking at Reality will continue to the extent we are confined to the perspective that is limited and finite. As the nature of extroverted consciousness is to grasp things through contrast, so there is no way left than to look at Reality in terms of religiously enhanced images. Also assert the *tāntrikas* that Reality as it is in itself cannot be approached at all apart from that which is finite. Insofar as we remain confined to the realm that is finite, to that extent we have to look at Reality in terms of such images that are antithetical.

This way of looking at Reality, contend the *tāntrikas,* is based upon the experience that we have while being a part of the objective world. Our experience of the world is in terms of change. It is the principle of Śakti which represents change or becoming of that which is manifest while remaining changeless in itself. Śakti as Goddess, the consort of Śiva, is seen to be the generating source of that which has come into being. Although power may represent creative force of generation, yet it is this very power which causes destruction of that which is manifest. It is the *śakti* of Śiva which causes both emission and withdrawal, birth and death, of the manifest. This change or ceaseless becoming, reason the *tāntrikas,* cannot occur in an absolute vacuum. It has to have a substratum, and it is Śiva who is said to be the underlying basis of that which changes in terms of giving up the preceding state by giving rise to a succeeding state. As substratum, Śiva provides the necessary continuity in the midst of ceaseless change. As an innate power of Śiva, Śakti emits the universe in the same manner as a male partner implants semen in the womb of a female. The emission of semen in the womb is actualized when the couple couplate—and it is through the sexual act that a new birth is given rise to. This entire process, from the implantation of the seed in the womb to its maturation and ejection, is termed as emission (*visarga*). In relation to the Divine Dyad we are told:

> Bhairava and his power of emission (*visarga-śakti*) constitute the couple (*yāmala*). One member (namely, Bhairava) rests in his own eternal, unchanging nature, and is therefore called 'repose' (*viśrāma*). The other is the primordial vibration (*prathama-spanda*) and is therefore called 'emergence'(*udaya*).[42]

Since vibration is said to be innate to Śiva, and also represents both emergence and withdrawal, there occurs continuously both merger and separation in the womb of Reality. When the couple copulate, there takes place the merger, and subsequently, on account of the merger, occurs separation in terms of the emission of the universe. What really happens is this: Upon the union of the couple, there takes place the disappearance which, prior to the union, was experienced as being discrete. Conversely, when the couple, at the end of orgasm, separate from each other, there emerges the manifest realm, which is experienced as consisting of discrete entities. Thus the cosmic manifestation and its dissolution correspond to the separation and union of the couple.[43]

The entire drama of the emergence of the macrocosm as the microcosm is experienced by the yogī within himself upon the attainment of the condition of Bhairava. For the yogī the twofold movement of expansion and contraction means that he simultaneously experiences both the introversion and extroversion of consciousness, and at the cosmic level is linked to the experience of manifestation and dissolution of the universe. Effectively does a yogī experience this state when his consciousness moves between the two points of Śiva and Śakti. When moving towards Śiva, a yogī has the experience of transcendental bliss in terms of eternal repose or passivity, and when moving towards Śakti, he experiences the emissional power of Śiva in terms of the unfoldment of the cosmos.[44] Śiva represents rest, whereas Śakti is the embodiment of activity. When both of them are brought together, they give rise to energy. Just as fire is caused by rubbing two sticks against each other, so is produced the principle of energy when Śiva and Śakti, although opposites, rub against each other in the heat of sexual act. For the yogī the coming of Śiva and Śakti together denotes the experience of the Absolute as being undifferentiated. By using the example of sexual orgasm, Abhinavagupta explains the essential features of this experience which a yogī has upon gaining the condition of Bhairava:

> Just as female ass or mare ((in orgasm) enters into (the delight of her own) Abode, the Temple of Bliss, repeatedly expanding and contracting and is overjoyed in her own heat, so (the yogī) must establish himself in the Bhairava couple, expanding and contracting, full of all things, dissolved and created by them again and again.[45]

The double movement towards expansion and withdrawal of the Couple corresponds to the twofold movement of exhalation and inhalation. The retention of breath signifies the union of Śiva and Śakti and the resultant bliss. The yogī, through the retention of breath, attains to the state of Bhairava whereby he, as it were, is transported into a state of non-death. It is through the persistent practice of *prāṇāyāma* that the yogī not only perceives but also enacts the play of the rhythm of cosmic manifestation and dissolution. Thus he becomes as powerful and divine as is said to be God.[46]

The two-way movement of expansion-contraction within the Absolute is expressed, at the religious level, in terms of the Divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti, the former representing the movement of withdrawal and the latter that of expansion. Withdrawal however is not possible unless accompanied by Śakti, because withdrawal itself denotes motion. As Śakti represents motion, so its presence is imperative if the movement of withdrawal has to be carried out to its logical end. *Tāntrikas,* thus, speak of Śakti as being innate to Śiva. Śiva transforms itself as the cosmos, and thereby into a limited being, when Śakti contracts herself. It is creative or expansive urge of Śiva to atomize himself into a finite entity. Simultaneously this expansion of Śiva and contraction of Śakti denote the process of resorption. By sinking into deep self-absorption, Śiva as a limited being overcomes his limitations by being one with himself. Similarly the contraction of Śiva means the expansion of Śakti, which results in the subsequent unfoldment of the cosmos.[47] This simultaneous process of expansion and contraction of Śiva and Śakti is realized by the yogī when he attains the condition of the rhythmic throbbing of the Divine Couple (*yāmala-bhāva*). Upon attaining this condition, the yogī comes to know that the Absolute is both Śiva and Śakti and neither of them:

> The Couple (*yāmala*) is consciousness itself, the unifying emission and the

> stable abode. It is the Absolute, the noble cosmic bliss consisting of both (Śiva and Śakti). It is the supreme secret of *kula* (the Absolute), neither quiescent nor emergent; it is the flowering fount of both quiescence and emergence.[48]

Thus the Couple, while representing Reality in its absoluteness, is neither passive nor active; rather it is the source of both.[49] In labelling Reality either as passive or active, we reduce it to being indentical with concepts, whereas in fact it transcends all forms of conceptual thinking. Although at the conceptual level Reality is cognized in terms of images that are opposite, yet somehow, at the level of non-thought, they merge into each other, and thereby emerges a unity and sameness which, claim the *tāntrikas,* can only be felt and not explained. At the level of mutual penetration there is a reversal of roles of Śiva and Śakti. This reversal of roles is actualized when Śiva takes up the role of Śakti and Śakti that of Śiva. This process of reversal of roles is explained as being similar to the image that is reflected between two facing mirrors. It is upon the complete union of the Couple when the reversal of roles is realized.[50] For the yogī this means that there is a female in each male and male in each female. It also explains the essential unity between what we experience as being opposites. At the cosmic level it signifies the identity between the macrocosm and the microcosm. In terms of yogic absorption it means that Reality is both transcendent and immanent and the yogī, as an atomized being, experiences identity with both the aspects.

This identity of the opposites, as represented by the Couple when taking up the role of the counterpart, is explained by the *tāntrikas* in terms of the symbolism of a transdimensional point (*bindu*). Prior to the emergence of polarity, *tāntrikas* look at Reality as being non-dual, and it is the *bindu* which is the symbol of this unity. Upon the emergence of polarity, the Couple as Śiva and Śakti are represented by the white point (*śukla-bindu*) and the red point (*ṣoṇita-bindu*) respectively. The colour white, representing semen, is the symbol of the male aspect of Reality, whereas the colour red, symbolizing the ovum, explains the female aspect of Reality.

The reversal of roles of Śiva and Śakti is explained in terms of merging of the white *bindu* into that of red and of the red *bindu* into that of white. This co-penetration of red and white points into each other explains as to how both the emissional processes of expansion and contraction within Reality take place. When the white *bindu* sinks into the red one, it denotes of Śiva taking up the role of Śakti. Similarly when the red *bindu* penetrates the white one, it denotes of Śakti assuming the role of Śiva. In the reversal of roles it is the red Śiva which is seen as the source of that which is manifest, whereas the white Śakti represents withdrawal of the world. Śiva and Śakti, however, regain their respective original condition when the red Śiva penetrates the white Śakti, and the white Śakti, the red Śiva. What this process of reversal of roles means is this: When one comes to the foreground, the other recedes into the background. In this manner *tāntrikas* explain the essential unity of Reality in the midst of apparent diversity.[51]

The other symbol that is used to explain the process of expansion and contraction of Śiva and Śakti is that of *visarga,* which is the last member of vowel series of Sanskrit. This vowel is written in the form of one dot upon the other (:), and is pronounced as *ḥ*. As a symbol of emission, the *visarga* is said to be identical with the Goddess of Passion (Kāmeśvarī). This is so because the Goddess is that power (*vimarśa*) by which Śiva apprehends himself, and without this power no emissional activity is possible. It is this emissional power which manifests itself as the manifest world, and as the movement of expansion and contraction of the Absolute. What it means at the level of practice is this: There is a continuous co-penetration of Śiva and Śakti which subsequently results in both expansion and contraction. When Śiva and Śakti, during the moment of their union, merge into each other, their merger is expressed by the *bindu* or single dot, which is the penultimate member of the series of Sanskrit vowels, and is pronounced as *ṁ*. Since unity denotes identity, so the *bindu* (.) is also called the mixed point (*miśra-bindu*). It is so called because the *bindu,* on the one hand, is the symbol of the non-dual state of Reality and, on the other, represents the process of creative fertility that is given rise to upon the union of Śiva and Śakti. When the seed attains to the state of swollenness (*ucchūna*), it bursts forth, and thereby gives rise to a sprout. Similarly Śiva and Śakti, upon their union, attain to the state of swollenness which subsequently terminates in the emission of the universe.[52] As the symbol of generation, the mixed point is called the "sun of knowledge", "the Lord of Passion" (Kāmeśvara). The yogīs adore and glorify Kāmeśvara as the highest Self as well as the form (*piṇḍa*) of Reality. It is the union of Śiva and Śakti which expresses the highest Self, and thereby represents the Divine Couple as Kāmeśvara and Kāmeśvarī.[53]

THE NATURE OF DIVINE EMISSION

As already pointed out, Tantrism conceives of Reality in terms of its dynamism, which is expressed as consisting of images which are dialectically opposed to each other and in terms of which Reality, through the process of contrast, is mentally apprehended. The interaction that occurs between the opposites gives rise to a synthesis, which reflects either appearance or disppearance of the universe. The dialectic of opposites, in the language of Tantrism, is represented by Śiva and Śakti, and their union results in a new synthesis, which is the emergence of the manifest realm. This entire activity is carried out on account of the emissional power (*visarga-śakti*) of Reality.[54]

The *visarga* fundamentally is the last vowel of Sanskrit alphabet. In its primordialness, it represents a voiceless or silent aspiration. When the aspiration is actualized, it is called emission, emergence, or emanation. There exists a complex relationship between the *visarga* as a vowel and as the power of emission. This complexity of relationship is explained thus:

> The knowing subject has its essence the supremely subtle vibration of the Self. It is characterized by knowledge and action, and its nature is one of expansion and contraction, that is, of opening and closing. It is not like a pot, and so on, which is inert, limited and stationary. The more this combination of expansion and contraction becomes evident in the vibration of the heart, of the triangle, etc., the more does the subjectivity become elevated, until it reaches the consciousness of Bhairava (that is, of supreme Reality). Conversely, the more the expansion and contraction diminish, the more does the subjectivity fall until it becomes inert like a stone, etc. The expansion and contraction is the characteristics of the *visarga* (emission), whose essence is freedom, that is, the very power of the Lord, of the Ultimate. Therefore, the phoneme *ḥ*, the *visarga*, is termed as the Rudrayāmala, the Rudra-dyad, because it consists of both the supreme Śiva and Śakti, of the rest and activity which consititute the union of Bhairava with his Beloved.[55]

From the above explanation we may conclude that the *visarga* is that inherent power of Reality by means of which the twofold movement of expansion and contraction becomes operational. This emissional power of expansion-contraction also denotes the absolute freedom of Reality, as without this freedom no emission can take place. Any kind of obstruction would impose curtailment upon the freedom of Śiva. Since Śiva is identical with freedom, so his emissional activity too must be of autonomus nature.

The *visarga* not only denotes freedom, but also the seed of fertility. As such the *visarga* and the primordial sound (*nāda*) are identical, and so represent the creative pulsation of Śiva. The power of emission of

Śiva represents the feminine principle, and so is called as the Goddess, Devī, or the Kaulikī-śakti, or the primordial sounding. It is on account of the *visarga* that this variegated universe of finite beings and of objects is actualized when the Divine Couple co-mingle with each other.

The yogī experiences this emissional activity of expansion-contraction within himself upon attaining to the state of Bhairava or Śaṁkara. The attainment of this state also results in the realization of such powers which enable him to enact within himself the play of appearance and disppearance of the cosmos. It means that the yogī practically becomes God. In relation to Śiva, it denotes that through mere will the process of both emanation and withdrawal is enacted. When the movement of emanation begins, it signifies the movement of descent of Śiva to actual manifestation of the cosmos. The withdrawal denotes the movement of ascent from earth to Śiva. The former movement denotes that there occurs emission of the universe when Śiva and Śakti co-penetrate each other. The latter movement signifies that which is manifest returns to its primal condition, which means that Śiva withdraws everything into himself which he had emitted. The process of manifestation is of centrifugal (*pravṛtti*) nature, whereas the movement of withdrawal is of centripetal (*nivṛtti*) nature.[56]

A yogī, upon attaining to the condition of Bhairava, gains the capacity of experiencing the alternating currents of manifestation and withdrawal within himself—such a yogī, indeed, is termed a Siddha. In yogic terms the manifestation of the cosmos also results in the embodiment of the cosmic power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) of Śiva. This cosmic power, as it were, remains locked up in the lower mystical wheel, called the *mūlādhāra-cakra,* in an individual. To the extent Kuṇḍalinī remains in the dormant condition, to that extent will an individual remain in the state of bondage. It is by releasing this cosmic power from its confinement of limitation that the movement of contraction is realized, and thereby is actualized liberative freedom of transcendence.

The Kuṇḍalinī obtains release from its atomizing state by being aroused from dormancy through the yogic methods of concentration and of *prāṇāyāma.* Once aroused, Kuṇḍalinī travels upwards by piercing the various mystical centres along the spinal cord. Upon reaching the top of the head, which is termed as the *sahasrāracakra,* the Kuṇḍalinī is united with Śiva, which means she discards the limitative state which she had been experiencing prior to her arousal. The ascent of Kuṇḍalinī denotes liberation as well as withdrawal, whereas her descent indicates the process of manifestation as well as of bondage.

A perfect yogī (*siddha-yogī*) is said to have the power of enacting both the alternating currents within at will. Even when his normal perceptions are directed outwards, he has the power of experiencing both these movements of *visarga* uninterruptedly. He can arouse the Kuṇḍalinī from her state of sleep merely by willing. The awakening of Kuṇḍalinī is equated with the soteriological liberation, which is of the nature of repose (*samāveśa*). The liberative tranquillity emerges when the Kuṇḍalinī sinks (*viśrānti*). In equal measure can a yogī experience the descent of Kuṇḍalinī as being identical with the process of manifestation of the cosmos. The process of manifestation denotes that the Kuṇḍalinī as the infinite emissional power gets locked up in the root-*cakra* at the base of the spinal cord.

In order to explain as to what is the nature of the emissional power of the Absolute, *tāntrikas* make use of a symbolism which is totally dependent upon the mystical nature of Sanskrit alphabet. No emission whatsoever is possible unless two opposites interact with each other. For the *tāntrikas* it is the union of Śiva and Śakti that results in what may be called the emission of the universe. The emissional power of the Couple is explained in terms of the Sanskrit alphabet. Each letter of Sanskrit is considered by the *tāntrikas* as being of the nature of pure energy. The term *visarga* is the last member in the series of vowels, and is depicted as two dots one upon the other. The single dot (*bindu*) precedes the *visarga* as the fifteenth vowel. The *visarga,* in contrast to *bindu,* is seen as that innate power of the Absolute by which both cognition and action are realized. This understanding of *visarga* means that the *tāntrikas* think of Reality as being self-referral, and thereby dynamic.

It is the subjectivity of Reality which, as it were, determines its self-referral nature. When translated into actuality, it means that consciousness is always self-referral in nature. It is the capacity for knowledge or action which marks one's subjectivity. The cognition of an object or of one's own self is dependent upon three essential elements, which are the subject, the means of knowing, and the object. The symbolism that is used to explain these three elements are the fire, the moon, and the sun.[57] The illuminating nature of subjectivity is said to be identical with the glowing flames of fire, and so fire is considered to be the most appropriate symbol for the knowing subject. Were not the subject illuminating by nature, there would be no possibility of knowing anything. This means that knowledge is equated with the sun because of its tendency of removing such impediments that obscure the process of knowing. It is the light of the sun which removes darkness, and so the *means of knowledge, like the sun, enable the subject to acquire* knowledge upon the removal of obsctructions that obscure knowledge. As far as the object of knowledge is concerned, it is equated with the moon. As the moon reveals itself through the reflected light of the sun, likewise the object of knowledge reveals itself through the reflected light of the subject.[58]

The symbolism of fire as denoting one's subjectivity is somewhat complex. According to *tāntrikas,* there are three abodes of fire: the fire on earth, the fire as lightning in the sky, and the fire as deity in heaven. These three abodes as well as forms of fire correspond to the object of knowledge, means of knowledge, and the knowing subject. As the flames of fire spread their illuminating light by going upwards and by consuming the obstructions that come in its way, so do the illuminating rays of consciousness consume the darkness that obscures knowledge. It is upon the removal of darkness that knowledge is apprehended. With the emergence of knowledge comes into being tranquillity and peace. Thus the *tāntrikas* want to say that Reality is both active and non-active, and so the Divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti may be seen as consisting of transcendent peace and of immanent dynamism. As the flames of fire burn all distinctions of deversity, so the illuminating light of consciousness, by reducing diversity to ashes, gives rise to the experience of the Ultimate as being non-different:

> All things deposited in the fire of the belly of one's own consciousness, suddenly (*haṭhataḥ*), abandoning all distinctions, feed it with their own power. When the diversity, which divides things, is dissolved away by the violent digestion (*haṭhataḥ*), the deities of consciousness (i.e., the senses) devour the universe transformed (by this process) into the nectar (of 'I'). Once they are satisfied, they rest at one with God Bhairava Who is the fullness of one's own nature and Sky of Consciousness which, solitary, rests in the Heart.[59]

The Divine Couple, on account of the innate emissional power, both initiate and actualize the process of self-manifestation and self-withdrawal. Were the Couple destitute of this power, there would neither occur the emergence nor the dissolution of the cosmos. On account of possessing the innate power of emission, the Couple upon co-penetration begin both the processes of expansion and contraction as well as take up, through the process of reversal of roles, the roles of each other. In the context of a yogī it means that he, by sinking into the interior absorption (*turīya*), attains the condition of Bhairava. In relation to the manifestation of Sanskrit letters, it means that each phoneme has its origin in the Supreme Word (*parāvāk*). The Supreme Word, being identical with hightest Reality, manifests itself as the letters of Sanskrit alphabet when it descends downwards in terms of which the manifest realm is revealed. These Sanskrit letters are seen as representing pure energy, which constitute, at the level of manifestation, the essential elements of a *mantra.* The nature and content of a *mantra,* within the Tāntric context, has been explained thus:

> All-embracing *I-ness* (*pūrṇāhantā*) is the mistress of all letters from (the first) *A* to (the last) *Kṣa* which, as the absolute (*anuttara*) power of unstruck sound (*anāhata*), it contains and encapsulates. Thus it is pure immutable awarences even though it has absorbed into itself every cycle of creation and destruction in the play of the Wheel of Energies constituting the unfolding order (*ṣaḍadhvan*) of countless words and all they denote. It is the supreme level of speech, the great unspoken Mantra which, eternally manifest, is the life of all beings. Here it is called the vibration of the Lord because it unfolds pulsating within one's own being as does the movement of this divine universe.[60]

Since a *mantra* for a *tāntrika* is identical with the Supreme Word,[61] which is but Śiva itself, it means that the *mantra,* in its manifest condition, is the best means of arriving at the liberative goal of oneness. It would mean that a *mantra* enables a *tāntrika* to know what his essential nature (*svabhāva*) is. A *mantra* is causally effecacious on account it being identical with the Supreme Word. The divine power of a *mantra* becomes operational only when received, at the time of initiation, from the mouth of a spiritual teacher *(guru*). Once empowered by a teacher, a *mantra* is not a mere combination of sounds, but the instrument of supernatural energies—and these powers are but the *visarga.*

The emissional process of cosmic manifestation, from the highest to the lowest, has to pass through stages, which are the highest (*parā*), the intermediate (*parāparā*), and the lowest (*aparā*). These levels correspond to the three levels of manifestation of the Word, which are (i) the visionary (*paśyanti*), (ii) the intermediate (*madhyamā*), and (iii) the gross (*vaikharī*). The first fifteen vowels of Sanskrit constitute the emissional process of manifestation of the Word. The fifteenth vowel, the *bindu*, is the symbol of the finite knowing subject. The sixteenth vowel, the *visarga,* is said to be identical with the Ultimate, and is accordingly present in all the fifteen vowels. The fiffteen vowels, when looked at from an esoteric perspective, represent the fifteen lunar days (*tithis*). All the fifteen vowels jointly give rise to what is called 'the moon of awakened consciousness' (*candrabodha*). As the moon is the source of immortal nectar (*soma*), so the moon of awakened consciousness represents the state of enlightenment, a state in which the yogī gains complete immortality by overcoming death.

While moving towards full manifestation, the Word, at the level of vision, does not suffer from any differentiation. Rather it contains within itself the phonemes of the spoken speech. The speech which is spoken is but the sound-energy, as it has its source in the silent sound of the Absolute. At the level of manifestation, speech is related to breath, *prāṇa,* in that it is breath which facilitates the emergence of the spoken speech.[62]

The real differentiation of the Word begins at the intermediate level (*madhyamā*). At this level the awareness of finitude begins to cloud one's knowledge concerning the undifferentiated nature of the Absolute. With regard to speech, it means that the phonemes begin to emerge as distinct entities, and thereby tend towards the actualization of a knowledge that is dualistic in orientation and which becomes operational at the gross level of manifestation. Since the intermediate level lies between the highest and the lowest, there is all the possibility for awareness either to move upwards towards enlightenment or downwards towards finitude. To the extent the Word, at this level, is seen as one of the thirty-six categories of existence (*tattvas*), to that extent will one move towards bondage, which, from the perspective of spoken speech, would mean that the entire cosmos is seen as consisting of sixteen vowels, that is, from *A* to *Ḥ*.[63]

The lowest stage of manifestation is marked by the appearance of knowable objects. The knowables, as distinct entities, are cognized through the process of contrast and exclusion, which means that each entity has an opposite. It is this oppositional difference which constitutes the empirical knowledge of the manifest realm. Upon the manifestation of phonemes, each vowel stands for something higher than itself. Thus the Supreme (*anuttara*) is represented by the letter *A,* whereas the gross realm, which is the manifest realm, is represented by the letter *I.* The *I,* as the symbol of Divine Will, is responsible in initiating the process of emission of that which is manifest.[64] As to how this emissional process is initiated is described thus:

> Now there occurs the appearance of knowable objects, which takes place in will (the *I*) and denomination *Ī.* As knowable objects begin to appear, begin to separate themselves, there occurs, on the gross level, the five gross elements and, on the subtle plane, the five subtle elements. This results in ten principles, namely, earth, water, fire, air, space, smell, taste, form, touch, and sound. This is the manifestation of the knowable objects. At the same time, the sense faculties are being manifested as instruments of cognition. That is to

> say, the five action faculties, namely, sexual, excretory, ambulatory, grasping, and speaking, in which power of action predominates; and the five sense faculties, smelling, tasting, seeing, touching, and hearing, in which the power of cognition predominates.[65]

When manifestation, at the gross level, occurs, it is in the shape of a certain form—and the categories that are given rise to at this level are the five great elements (*mahābūtas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), the five faculties of action (*karmendriyas*) and the five faculties of cognition (*buddhīndriyas*). Upon taking up the gross form, the emissional process is not at all exhausted. The finite self as a bound being has still to appear. The process of cosmic manifestation is reached to its fruition upon the appearance of the finite self. The appearance of the finite self is described in the following terms:

> Then, when by gradual process, the aspect of the knowable begins to diminish, the perceiving aspect begins to manifest itself, namely, mind, egoity, intellect, primordial materiality, and individual consciousness. Thus the principles, beginning with the earth and ending with the individual consciousness, correspond to the series of phonemes that run from *K* and *M*. The individual consciousness, even though it is a limited perceiver, is here reckoned as belonging to the group of knowable objects. For without it who would perceive the object of knowledge beginning with earth, etc.? Such is the nature of that which appears as the knowable object.[66]

THE FIVE LIMITING CONDITIONS

When Śiva, the supreme and the transcendent Absolute, appears, through its emissional power, as the finite self, it thereby puts upon itself such limiting conditions which, as it were, curtail its absolute freedom. The limiting conditions that appear upon the appearance of the finite self are known as the concealing sheaths (*kañcukas*), and correspond to the five Upaniṣadic sheaths or coverings (*koṣas*). It is on account of these five limiting conditions that the infinite is reduced to the finitude of space-time. Thus the limiting conditions are seen as being responsible for giving rise to the sense of difference between the infinite, which is Śiva itslef, and the finite self, which is a bound being. In this manner comes into being knowledge that is contingent upon contraries. So dependent knowledge cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be said to be non-relative and therefore real.

Tantrism accepts the Sāṁkhyan manifestational categories—and they are twenty-five in number. It is upon the scaffolding of these categories that Tantrism superimposes the five *kañcukas*. Tantrism assumes that the infinite Self incarnates itself as the finite self on account of the five limiting conditions. How is it possible, it may be asked, for the infinite to transform itself into that which is finite? It hurts one's sensibility to say that the infinite has become the finite. According to Tantrism, the objective universe, which we consider to be marked by change and discontinuity, has its ontic ground in Śiva, and Śiva is but the eternal Absolute. Why does at all Śiva transform himself into a changing universe? Does it not imply that Śiva, while appearing as the finite universe, undergoes some kind of modification? *Tāntrikas* say that Śiva, while manifesting himself as the objective universe, does not suffer from any change or modification. He engages in the manifestational activity because it is his nature. Moreover, the cosmic manifestation and resorption is just Śiva's divine play. All this mass of creation is nothing but Śiva itself, and so no ontic difference may be seen between the finite and the infinite. As the ordinary people perceive both the ontic and epistemic difference between Śiva and his cosmic manifestation, it is the yogī alone who knows that the realm of temporality does not actually exist.[67] As to the process regarding the appearance of the finite we are told:

> The mass of knowable objects, without abandoning their state of being knowable objects, operate to unify the two different aspects: knowable objects and limited knower. The principles engaged in this unification are: *kalā* (the principle of division and thereby of limitation), formed of air, which impells and consists of a limited capacity for action; impure knowledge, formed of fire, which illuminates and consists of limited capacity of knowledge; *māyā*, formed of water, which satiates; the power of attachment, expressed in the verse by the word *indra*, formed of earth, which consists of intense affection, and is by nature a stopping, an immersion.
>
> These are the four powers that maintain the individual self resting in the middle like Triśaṅku, which otherwise would fall into the condition of inertia like a rock, etc., or would ascend into the Sky of Consciousness like the supreme Lord. In either case, in the absence of the finite knowing subject, there would be no knowing subject, there would be no knowing objects, nor would there be contraction and expansion, because without contraction, expansion is not logically possible. This is absurd, because the entire universe, that is, the manifestation of the knowable objects or the manifestation of the corresponding knower, is projected by the emissional force which is precisely expansion and contraction.[68]

As far as the number of limiting conditions are concerned, there is a variation to be found in the Tāntric texts. Some texts speak of five, whereas others give number to be six. Whatever be the number, the function of them all, individually and collectively, is to facilitate the emergence of that which is bound, limited and finite. The first limiting condition is that of *kalā,* or the power of division. It is on account of *kalā* that Śiva, while projecting himself as the universe, is reduced to the condition of finitude. It is a condition which Śiva willingly imposes upon himself. This condition of Śiva is linked to the state of deep sleep. As in sleep nothing can be initiated or accomplished due to the absence of will, so Śiva as a finite being finds himself bound, and so unable to exercise his freedom.[69] Whatever limited actions ensue from this state of existence, they are what they are because of *kalā.* The second limiting condition is said to be of impure knowledge (*aśuddhavidyā*). As *kalā* limits the range of action, so the limiting condition of impure knowledge results in the rise of such forms of knowledge that are relative, and therefore unreliable. It is on account of this limiting condition that we are unable to know what our essential nature is, which is that of Śivahood. Upon not knowing what we are, we suffer from what may be called the metaphysical ignorance. The third limiting condition is that of attachment (*rāga*). This limiting conditon denotes that an individual forms such an attachment with an object that he forgets himself what he is. Also attachment cripples the freedom of will, which means we are unable to realize that which we cherish. It is this limiting conditions which causes impediments in the functioning of will, and consequently it operates within a range that is limited and subject to space-time structure. It is the limitation of attachment which inserts distortions in the functioning of will. The fourth covering is known as *māyā. Māyā* is that projective power by which the process of manifestation is actualized. This *māyā* does by being the material cause of that which is manifest or that which is going to be manifested. On account of it being a causal agent as well as a substratum, *māyā* is spoken of as being identical with fullness (*apyāyika*). The fifth limitation is that of time (*kāla*). Time denotes temporality, which means the objects of space-time suffer from finitude, and consequently terminate in the oblivion of absence. It would also mean that the objective universe, of which we are a part, is subject to time, and so is accordingly finite. The last covering is called the law of restriction (*niyati*). Whatever is empirical, and thereby temporal, is bound and limited. It is bound by space and reduced to finitude by time. Thus the manifest realm in its entirety suffers from the limitation of space and time. These limitations, technically speaking, represent the impure path (*aśuddhadhvan*). The path is so named because of it being the cause of bondage.

The impure path can be understood by contrasting it with that of pure path. The emergence of both the paths is contingent upon the cosmogensis itself. When the emissional process of manifestation begins in Śiva, the first five categories that emerge are said to constitute the pure path. This is so because no differentiation is experienced at the first five manifestational levels. These pure categories are Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśiva, Īśvara and Vidyā. The process of the emergence of pure path is described thus:

> When the aspect of objectivity begins by degrees to be concealed, and the form of consciousness begins to unfold, then to that degree there occurs a firmness, an increasing fullness of the form of consciousness: a union with its own light, a vibration which is characterized by the attainment of supreme freedom. Everything then is thoroughly pervaded by the form of consciousness. The expression 'the pentad of *brahman*' refers to the five phonemes *S* to *KṢ,* which pervade, fulfill, cause to expand the self—and they relate the five principles to Vidyā, Īśvara, Sadāśiva, Śakti and Śiva. They are formed of subtle earth, water, fire, air, and space, and correspond to the five faces of Śiva (which are) Sadyojata, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tātpuruṣa, and Īśāna. This is the emissional power (*visarga-śakti*) in its intermediate form.[70]

The emissional power of the intermediate level, which is identical with the pure path, consists of the pentad of *brahman.* The first member of the pentad is the category of Śiva, which is identical with the pervasive power of consciousness (*cit-śakti*). The second member is Śakti, and is one with the pervasive power of bliss (*ānanda-śakti*). The third category is that of Sadāśiva, and is said to embody the absolute power of will (*icchā-śakti*). It is will which is seen as playing a balancing act between the power of action and that of knowledge. As far as the fourth category is concerned, it is termed as Īśvara and is seen as representing the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*). The last category is that of pure knowledge (*śuddhavidyā*). This category, strangely enough, is said to represent the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*). It is this category which, while representing the intermediate manifestational level, constitutes the pure path (*śuddhadhvan*). It is these five powers which, as it were, express the absoluteness of Paramaśiva, and this aspect is described thus:

> Finally, these pentads are resolved back into the Ultimate, *A*. In this way the emissional power expands with a form that extends from the lunar stations, beginning with *A*, to the pentad of *brahman*. This is the Wheel of Powers

> (*śakti-cakra*) of the Lord, of Bhairava, a Wheel which is an uninterrupted continuous series. For the five powers of consciousness, bliss, will, knowledge and action, which are made of five elemental powers (i.e., of earth, water, fire, air, and space), are in effect the powers of consciousness placed in the triangle, namely, the Ultimate, the will and the unfolding (*AIU*), which would unfold into a fivefold division.[71]

Śiva displays the freedom of will when he, as it were, empties himself of divinity by becoming a finite being. It is through the five powers, which constitute the pentad of *brahman,* that Śiva enacts the play of cosmogensis. Collectively these powers are known as the Wheel of Powers of Śiva. The tripartite level of manifestation as the highest, the intermediate, and the lowest constitute the entire range of categories of existence, which from Paramaśiva to the finite being are said to be thirty-seven.

THE EMISSIONAL DYNAMICS

That alone is emitted which is forced out of the body. It is the force, whether internal or external, that allows the emissional flow to be actualized. It means that Śiva, even in the state of rest, is not totally tranquil or passive. Prior to the actualization of the cosmic emission, there continues to throb a silent agitation (*kṣobha*) within the belly of Śiva. Thus the first stage of manifestation consists of inaudible friction or agitation, which, when intensified, terminates in the process of cosmogensis. It is this silent agitation which, slowly but steadily, gives rise to what may be called the proper agitation (*prakṣobha*). It is the proper agitation which ultimately results in the emissional explosion of the universe. At poetic level, this emissional process is actualized when urge for self-expression becomes intense. It is at the third stage where the creative urge for self-expression overflows the reservoir of endurance. This bursting forth of the emissional urge is explained thus:

> That indeed is the emissional power, and from it this whole universe arises. In it we may distinguish three different moments, a capacity for agitation (*prakṣobha*), the beginning of the movement of agitation. Then, when there occurs a state of fullness of that agitation, the group of the phoneme *A* begins progressively to diminish as the other (lesser) vowels manifest. Thus the characteristic of that set of vowels is that it is produced from the oscillatory movement of the emissional power.[72]

The above statements make it quite clear that in Śiva, even when in absolute rest, there is a kind of oscillatory movement occurring within, which otherwise is known as *spandana*. The throb or agitation gives rise to the delightful flavour upon reaching the point of climax. It is almost identical with the orgasmic bliss. As the orgasmic bliss results in the emission of semen, so the throbbing bliss is nothing else but the emission itself. The throb or agitation is Śakti, and it is on account of Śakti that agitation within Śiva as consciousness gives rise to the emissional bliss. Upon the union of Śiva and Śakti, there begins the process of emission which, upon its actualization, results in the rise of the universe. It is this emissional power of manifestation and resorption which a *tāntrika* yogī wants to master through such rituals which have a sexual orientation. Thus for a *tāntrika* the ritualized sex is seen as a means of attaining that divinized power which expresses itself in the form of cosmic manifestation and withdrawal. This aspect is made quite explicit when we read:

> Those who desire to gain entry into this emissional state in all its fullness follow the traditional lineage which teaches 'By means of churning and tasting.'[73] So we see that the Supreme Light which animates the entire body and which presides over the central vein (*nāḍī*) agitated by the wine, garlands and seasons, attains a condition of emission, and arrives at a state of ecstasy, of bliss, which may not be completely full; but if it is full, it is made of the Lord himself. Therefore this emissional power appears as a single unique power.[74]

Once the objective universe is vomitted out of the Divine Couple on account of the power of emission, the universe is not seen as being apart from the Divine Dyad; rather the presence of Divine as emission is all-pervasive. The immanent presence of the Divine is not a figurative presence. It is concrete and actual. Accordingly, therefore, does Tantrism assert the identity between the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The vomitting of the universe out of the Divine Couple has been explained in terms of images, and one of them is that of lotus-like heart. The union of the Couple is similar to the conjunction of the two halves of a lotus-like heart. Upon the union of the two halves of the heart, there is given rise to an interior void which is like space. As space is seamless and single, so is seen the highest Reality which is realized upon the union of the Couple. When a yogī attains this state of seamless unity of the void, he thereby experiences the absolute freedom of being one with the Absolute. The difference, however, between the void that represents the Absolute and the space that represents the interior of the heart is this: the latter is enclosed and therefore is bound, whereas the former is unbounded and unlimited. The enclosed space of the heart is the symbol of emission, and so represents the process of universal manifestation.

It is not only the manifestation of the universe which occurs on account of the emissional power of the Couple. Equally is this power responsible for resorption or withdrawal. Upon vomitting or emitting the universe, there occurs no change or fissure in the essential unity of the Absolute. That which has been emitted, however, experiences itself as being separate from that which is the source of emission. This sense of separation is overcome through the process of resorption, which means that the manifest realm returns to its original condition which existed prior to its manifestation. Initially the process of resorption is understood as if the manifest entities are going to be destroyed in the dark abyss of the Couple. For the *tāntrikas* this is just a subjective fear. What, according to them, actually happens is this: By abandoning their manifest state, entities and beings attain to what actually is their essential nature, which is that of Śivahood. In yogic terms it is a condition which a yogī attains upon the attainment of *unmīlana-samādhi,* a state in which the yogī realizes the pulsating inner throb of Śiva, which both structures and maintains the finite realities. What this amounts to saying is this: A yogī has a introverted cognition concerning the finite realities as being non-different from the Ultimate.

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3. Chintaharan Chakravarti, "Antiquity of Tantrism," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 6 (1930), pp. 114-26.

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5. Cf., *Guhyasamājatantra,* ch. 1; *Hevajratantra,* ch. 1.
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19. Ibid.
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21. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* 2.8-10.
22. Ibid., 2.12.
23. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (London, 1973), p. 36.
24. *Śivasūtravimarśinī* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.Sū.Vi.*), 1.12.
25. Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva* (Princeton, 1981), p. 36.
26. O'Flaherty, op. cit., pp. 10, 25.
27. Ibid., p. 10.
28. S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults,* p. 229.
29. Stella Kramrisch, op. cit., p. 428. Concerning the five faces of Śiva, which are also known as the pentad of *brahman* (*brahmapañcaka*), Gonda has this to say: "This doctrine of the five manifestations of Śiva, who, according to his worshippers, is . . . the Great Lord, expresses the belief that he is the all, the Highest and the Unique who embraces and comprises the universe and all beings and of whom they are composed. . . . It emphasizes . . . God's identity with the universe and the universe's identity with God who is omnipresent and manifests himself . . . always and everywhere." J. Gonda, op. cit., p. 35. When Śiva is seen as the All and everything in the All, then how can we expect the existence of opposites? It is in the Allness of the Ultimate in which are subsumed what we consider to be as opposites or contraries.

30. Abhinavagupta, *TĀ*, 4.181-88.
31. Vasugupta, *Ś.Sū.*, 1.1.
32. The term *bhairava* is derived from the root *bhi*, meaning 'to be scared of.' In its adjectival form the terms becomes *bhīru*, denoting thereby that which is 'timid' on account of fear. That which causes fear is called 'Bhairava.' Bhairava as a fearful divinity corresponds to Kālī as the awesome Goddess. The experience of Bhairava as the terrible, within the Tāntric context, must be seen as indicating the infinite dimension of the Ultimate. The terrifying cosmic infinitude of the Ultimate was experienced by Arjuna when Kṛṣṇa revealed his true nature as being non-different from the Absolute. It is the transcendent aspect of Bhairava which Kṣemarāja speaks of when he gives a symbolic interpretation to *bha, ra,* and *va* as meaning *bharana, ravana,* and *vamana,* which express the three aspects of God as creator, sustainer and destroyer of that which he has, through self-manifestation, given rise to. See Elizabeth Chalier-visuvalingam, "Bhairava: Koṭwāl of Vārāṇāsī," in *Vārāṇasī Through the Ages* (Benares, 1985).
33. It is the term *udyoga,* emergence or exertion, which best expresses the bursting forth of a seed upon the emergence of a sprout.
34. The 'heart' (*hṛdaya*), in its yogic connotation, denotes the mystical wheel or centre of power (*śakti-cakra*) through which the *kuṇḍalinī,* upon her arousal, ascends towards the sky, that is, towards absolute freedom. The yogic physiology believes that it is the heart which serves as a locus for the vital breaths as well as for the sensations of the senses. This is how Abhinavagupta, in a broader context, explains as to what the heart signifies. He writes in his commentary, called *Vimarśinī,* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (hereinafter cited as *ĪPK*), the following: "*Hṛdaya* means mainstay or resting place. According to formerly established theory, the insentients rest in the sentient and the latter rests in the light of consciousness, with which it is one. The place of rest of this also is the power, the free consciousness. Therefore, in different authoritative texts, the same is spoken of as the resting place of the universe, which ultimately rest in Paramaśiva, the highest abode of all. The 'heart', the resting place of all, is *mantra,* which, in its essence, is nothing but free consciousness, which also is simply the power of the transcendental speech (*parā-vāk*)." *IPV,* 1.5.11-14.
35. The three transcendental powers are will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*), which constitute the absolute freedom of the Absolute.
36. The *tāntrikas* are of the view that the phonemes (*varṇa*) of Sanskrit alphabet have emanated from the Supreme Word (*parā-vāk*), which consequently are non-different from the Absolute. Each phoneme in its manifest condition represents a specific aspect of the cosmic power of the Absolute. So the phoneme *a,* being the first vowel, is considered to be representing the Ultimate (*anuttara*).

37. Abhinavagupta, *PTLV,* 9.
38. *TĀ,* 5.79.
39. *Sp.Kā.,* 1.1; *TĀ,* 3.2; *Ś.Sū.,* 3.45.
40. Maheśvarānanda beautifully explains the nature of the Divine Couple while using profusedly such poetic images which have a charm of their own. He writes: "O Three-eyed Lord! You contemplate your pair of opposites such as heaven and earth, ocean and river, tree and forest, tone and microtone, internal and external, white (semen) and red (ovum), light and darkness, knowledge and action, in (your) extensive consciousness of both." *MM,* p. 72
41. *Ś.Dṛ.,* 3.7.
42. Abhinavagupta, *Paryantapañcaśikā,* ed. by V. Raghvan, in *Abhinavagupta and His Works* (Varanasi, 1981), 30.
43. *TĀ,* 3.29.49, 67-68.
44. Ibid., 3.28.32.
45. Ibid., 3.5.80.
46. Ibid., 3.29.49, 67.
47. *TĀV,* 5.60.
48. *TĀ,* 29.116-17.
49. *MM,* 28.
50. *MM,* ed., by Vrijvallabha Dvivedi, p. 152.
51. Puṇyānandanātha, *Kāmakalāvilāsa,* trans., Sir John Woodroffe (Madras, 1971), p. 158.
52. Vrijavallabha Dvivedi, op. cit., p. 157.
53. Kṣemarāja, *Sp.Nr.,* trans., Jaideva Singh (Delhi, 1980), p. 66.
54. See K.V. Abhyankar, *A Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar* (Baroda, 1977), p. 314.
55. *PTLV,* 5-9a.
56. *TĀ,* 29.140-42.
57. Ibid., 3.120-21.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 3.262-64.
60. *Sp.Nr.,* p. 60. Maheśvarānanda (op. cit., 49) explains the mystic significance of *mantra* thus: "Reflection (*manana*) on one's own omnipresent consciousenss (*nijavibhāva*) and protection from the fear of one's own imitations is the undefinable intuition (*anubhūti*) which has absorbed all dualistic thoughts and is the meaning of *mantra.*"
61. *PTV,* p. 5.
62. *Prāṇa* is the breath that we inhale, and is said to flow through the mystical vein called *iḍā. Apāna,* on the other hand, is the breath that we exhale, and flows through *piṅgla* vein. In addition to these two breaths, we have three more, which are *udāna, samāna,* and *vyāna.* The *udāna,* which is an ascendent breath, is produced when the first two breaths, upon their union, dissolve into each other. This breath flows through the interior

void of the *suṣumnā* vein. The last two breaths, *samāna* and *vyāna*, infuse the body with life. The actual meaning of the last breath is difficult to tell. These breaths also correspond to the two movements of expansion (*vikāsa*) and contraction (*saṁkoca*) as well as to the various states of consciousness that a yogī experiences when in deep introversion. Concerning this, *TS*, pp. 38-39, describes: "When one wants to emit breath (*prāṇam uccicāyiṣuḥ*), he first rests in the void of the heart. Then, with the moon becoming full, that is, with the descending breath (*apāna*), he sees himself identified with the whole external world and thus becomes indifferent to everything. When, thereafter, the equalizing breath (*samāna*) appears, he experiences a rest (*viśrānti*) in the friction and fusion (of the whole manifestation). When the fire of ascending breath (*udāna*) appears, all distinctions between knower, known, and so forth, are devoured. Finally, when the pervading breath comes and the devouring fire subsides, he shines, free of all limitations. We are taught that these six (reposes), from that of the void to the pervading breath, are called the six lands of felicity (*ṣaṭ-ānandabhū*) (which are) *nijānanda, nirānanda, prāṇānanda, brahmānanda, mahānanda,* and *cidānanda.*"

63. *PTLV, Ākāradi-visargantam śivatattvam.* See *PTV* (p.13) wherein the manifestational levels of the Supreme Word are stated thus: "The supreme Lord, the Absolute, is the very reality of consciousness. Everything that shines in him without any differentiation is, on the plane of vision (*paśyanti*), the object of an awareness (*parāmṛṣṭam*) marked by tendency towards differentiation into phonemes, words, sentences. Then, in the intermediate level (*madhyamā*), differentiation appears and the objects tend to be produced, whereas at the lowest level (*vaikharī*) there is the differentiation in various words and sentences of the plane of *māyā.*" These three (or four) levels of manifestation of the Word are differently interpreted by the Krama School. This school follows a pentadic system, and so speaks of the five levels of speech. Concerning this Maheśvarānanda (op. cit., 50) has this to say: "The corporeal Speech is activity, the intermediate consists of knowledge, then visionary, then is will, the subtle is the common to all of them."
64. The Absolute as Śiva brings about the manifestation of the entire cosmos through speech. While commenting on the *TĀ*, 3.236, Jayaratha writes concerning the process of cosmic manifestation: "She, that is, the synthetic awareness (*parāmarśa*) whose nature is the (absolute) I (*ahaṃ*) and whose form is that of the supreme Word (*vaikharī*) is said to be gross so as to show that the other two states of (*vāc*) are (respectively) subtle and supreme. The supreme Word refers to nothing else but itself. When the supreme Sovereign, due to the innate and total autonomy (*svasvātantryāt*), wishes to appear externally yet without producing multiplicity associated with the process of what is expressed (*vācyavācaka-krama*), since the light of pure consciousness (*cit*) still prevails there, She is called the

Seeing or Visionary (*paśyanti*) since She is a form of the Subject who sees (*draṣṭṛ*). After this, the level of the intermediate Word (*madhyamā-pada*) is expressd when that which predominates is the sight (*darśana*), intermediate between the subject who sees and the object to be seen (*dṛśya*). This is the plane where, although the process (innate to any discourse) made of what expresses and what is expressed begins to unfold in outline, the (Word) nevertheless remains grounded in the intellect (*buddhi-mātraniṣṭha*) in a form that is manifest and unmanifest. After that, when the objective world predominates and the clear manifestation of the multiplicity resulting from the fact that henceforth the process of phonemes together with the speech organs, the places of articulation, and the articulatory process are present—(the Word) becomes completely solid and we have the (level) of speech called coporeal (*vaikharī*). Such is the threefoldness of the manifestation of the universe."

65. *PTLV*, vv. 5-9.
66. Ibid.
67. *TĀ*, ch. 13.
68. *PTLV*, vv. 5-9.
69. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrasāra* (hereinafter cited as *TS*), ch. 8.
70. *PTLV*, vv. 5-9.
71. Ibid.
72. *MVV*, 1.891-92.
73. *Vijñānabhairava* (hereinafter cited as *VB*), v. 70.
74. *MVV*, 1.896-99.

CHAPTER 3

Affirmative Transcendence

Most of the developed religions, no matter what their philosophical standpoints may be, adhere to the view that the world, or that which has a form, is not to be seen as an instrument of arriving at the soteriological goal, but as an impediment of the highest magnitude. It is this pessimistic view concerning materiality that has led many religions to devise such ways and means, both conceptual and practical, which would enable the religious adept to transcend, through the process of negation, that which is given, that is, which has a material form. Transcendence of the given through negation is said to result in the realization of the ultimate religious goal, which is either salvation or liberation. It is against this negativism of developed religions that Tantrism has offered a new alternative, which believes that the soteriological goal of liberation can be reached not by negating the given, but by affirming it, or by making it as the supreme instrument or means of arriving at the state of liberation. It is this revolutionary as well as subversive view of Tantrism that we shall be discussing below.

GENERAL REMARKS

The main material instrument that can be made use of for soteric purposes is the human body, and apart from it there is no any other means which can facilitate the passage for arriving at the goal of liberation. Unfortunately most of the developed religions look at the body in negative terms, and consider it to be a burden that has somehow to be thrown off. The human body is seen as a hindrance in the way of spiritual development. Why? Because it is considered to be impure, impermanent and transitory. This kind of understanding concerning the body, or that which has a form, has its source in a negative ontology which considers anything phenomenal as being illusory. It is an ontology which thinks that all material substances, including the body, can never enable one to have the experience of eternal bliss which is gained through the process of negation. This liberative bliss or peace is said to be eternal on account it being spiritual in nature, whereas the pleasures of the material objects, or of the senses of the body, are said to terminate, on account of their transitoriness, in pain or suffering. This ontology holds Real to be that which is indivisible, changeless and eternal—and this status is either given to the God of religion or to the metaphysical Absolute. In contrast to indivisible God, the material world is said to be either unreal or relatively real. The body, being the product of matter as well as a constitutive part of the material world, suffers from the same limitations which any material entity of the world suffers from, which is: transitoriness. If the body is not real on account of its ephemeral nature, then it is logical to say that it cannot enable one to possess that tranquil peace which is eternal, and which is obtained by transcending it. It is this negative viewpoint concerning the world which has served as a springboard for much of the life-denying spirituality among the major world religions.

Hinduism in general, and Brāhmanism in particular, share with other developed religions the view that the world as well as the human body are a hindrance in the way of spiritual life. The Sāṁkhya-Yoga thought, for example, has developed such an extreme form of dualism in which the Person (*puruṣa*) is in no manner related to matter (*prakṛti*). Whenever the Person comes in contact with matter, it suffers from the bondage of repeated rebirths and redeaths (*saṁsāra*). It is this endless series (*santāna*) of births and deaths of the Person which is termed as suffering. Insofar as the Person remains associated with materiality, to that extent there is no possibility of gaining liberation from *saṁsāra,* which simultaneously means freedom from the pain which the embodied existence entails. What this amounts to saying is this: All the products of matter have to be abandoned if the Person is to gain emancipation from the prison-house of the material body. Why is the negation of the body seen as a pre-requisite for the attainment of freedom from the bondage of *saṁsāra*? Because it is in and through the body that contact with the material world is established. Once the contact is established, the Person gets involved with the world, and thereby, as a consequence of this involvement, suffers from the endless cycle of transmigration.

As to how to gain freedom from this involvement with materiality is by dissociating from that which is outside there. And dissociation is affected in and through an intuition, and not through the rational process of thought, which comes to be by introverting consciousness. What it means is this: It is through dissociation or renunciation that the intuitive knowledge, which is also termed as enlightenment, is obtained, and upon the attainment of this enlightenment, the involvement of the Person with matter ceases to be. It is by isolating the Person from any kind of engagement with matter that complete freedom from the cycle of rebirth, and thereby from suffering, is realized.

While the Sāṁkhya believes in the attainment of intellectual intuition (*viveka*) as a means of liberation, the Yoga system, however, thinks that it is by introverting consciousness, which means by de-linking it from matter, that the state of "isolation" (*kaivalya*) is realized. Upon isolating itself from matter, the Person then abides in its own nature, which is said to be identical with the soteric freedom. Introversion of consciousness also denotes that the body has to be immobilized in terms of which it is made non-functional. The Advaita Vedānta school of Śaṁkara does not differ much from the Sāṁkhya-Yoga insofar as this understanding concerning matter is concerned. While the Sāṁkhya-Yoga do not deny the reality of matter, Śaṁkara, on the contrary, does not accord any degree of reality to it. For Śaṁkara the world is a product of transcendental ignorance (*avidyā*) or illusion (*māyā*), and so it cannot be said to possess any degree of ontic reality. Since the world is a product of illusion, so it means that which is of material nature must necessarily be identical with illusion. Insofar as the illusory is taken to be real, to that extent one is bound to suffer from the pain of phenomenality, which simultaneously means from the ever-recurring cycle of rebirth. It is upon dissociating from the products of *māyā* that the Real, which is *brahman,* is cognized as being non-different from one's own subjectivity (*ātman*). It is this doctrine of dissociation which the Buddhists too have employed as the best strategem for the attainment of liberative *nirvāṇa.* For the Buddhists the world is not simply unreal, but is a nightmare. Why? Because it constantly remains in the state of becoming (*bhava-cakra*), which is interpreted to mean that the world as well as entities therein are momentary (*kṣaṇa*). It is *becoming,* in contrast to Being, which is a given fact, and so is real. The aim of a Buddhist is, thus, to gain freedom from this becoming—and becoming is identical with *saṁsāra*. Freedom from *saṁsāra,* and thereby from suffering (*duḥkha*), is gained upon the attainment of *nirvāṇa,* which is a state of extinction.

Almost all the religions of India have developed such a kind of negativism towards the world in terms of which it is considered to be not a place worth living. The embodied life, which can be lived only in the world, is not viewed as a gift; rather it is seen as a kind of burden, and so needs to be somehow thrown off. It is in abandoning the physical aspect of life in which existential good is seen to lie. As it is in and through the body that life in the world is made possible, so the negation of the body is a pre-requisite for the treatment of the ill that is the mark of embodied life. Whatever doctrinal formulas may have been formulated or meditational techniques invented, all the ascetically-oriented Indian religions make use of them in such a manner as would facilitate the passage for transcendence, which means the negation of the physical. It is in the negation of the physical world in which ultimate autonomy or freedom is discovered. Thus the thrust of both Brāhmanism and Buddhism has been upon renunciation of that which is related to materiality. It is this spirit of renunciation or dissociation which is the main feature of Indian spirituality. Whatever is of the nature of renunciation terminates ultimately in the negation of that which is to be renounced.

It is difficult to accord any degree of affirmative reality to that which is to be negated or transcended. The little pleasures of the body have no significance in a spirituality that is renunciative, as any kind of pleasure is seen to be a stumbling-block in the way of soteric freedom. It is but natural to look upon the body as an un-necessary apparatus without which one would be better off. The aim of meditational techniques or of ascetical practices is to overcome the hurdles which the body gives rise to. It is this negative outlook which dominates the spirituality of the Great Tradition.

TĀNTRIKA ALTERNATIVE

With the inception of *tāntrika* spirituality or religiosity comes into being a new and fresh outlook that discards the disparaging view of the body of the Great Tradition. Although following in general the metaphysical outlook of the Great Tradition, yet Tantrism interprets non-dualistic thought of Brāhmanism in such a manner as would result in according due importance to both the body and the world. It interprets Brāhmanical non-dualism in terms of theism. The Absolute is no more seen as an undifferentiated mass of consciousness; rather it is seen as having an "ego". The supreme Reality is, thus, seen to be I-consciousness. It is on account of this theistic bent that Tantrism has been able to develop an affirmative spirituality concerning the world and the human body. Tantrism is of the firm view that soteric liberation from the saṁsāric bondage can be actualized only in and through the medium of the body.

It is upon this *a priori* assertion that Tantrism has boldly declared: Liberation (*mokṣa*) through pleasure (*bhoga*). No contradiction, thus, is found between the pleasures of the body and the soteric liberation. This *tāntrika* declaration concerning *mokṣa* and *bhoga* as being complementary has its source in the metaphysical view which looks at the world as being the extension (*prasāra*) or emission (*visarga*) of the Absolute (Paramaśiva). As the world is real or actual extension of Paramaśiva, so it accordingly reflects the glory and brilliance of the Lord. It is therefore erroneous to maintain that which is physical is necessarily an impediment in the way of spiritual development.

This *tāntrika* view of the world as the extension or expansion (*vikāsa*) of the Absolute denotes that the products of matter (*prakṛti*) are not unreal; rather they are real in the sense of being grounded in the Absolute. The Absolute of Tantrism is not like a passive Person (*puruṣa*) of the Sāṁkhya philosophy or like the lifeless Absolute (*brahman*) of Vedānta. Rather the Highest Lord (Paramaśiva) or the transcendent Absolute (*anuttara*) of Tantrism is a Person who is in possession of sovereign powers of will, knowledge and action. As consciousness, the Absolute is an Ego, and so is termed as an I-consciousness, which means that as an I-consciousness the Absolute throbs with an innate dynamism (*sphurattā*). The dynamism or the energetic power of Paramaśiva is termed as *śakti* or *spandana*. The Absolute expresses itself as the objective universe on account of the innate powers of unimpeded will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). The Absolute becomes the "this" (*idam*) or the world on account of its own innate will and not because of external or internal compulsions. The universe flashes forth (*prakāśamānatyā sphurati*) from Śiva as "I am" (*ahantā*) and "I am this" (*idantā*).

In interpreting the non-dual Absolute in terms of I-consciousness, Tantrism therby successfully transforms the Brāhmanical monism into a theism which looks at Reality in personal terms. *Tāntrika* absolutism is theistic precisely because the Absolute is said to be in possession of such sovereign powers as, for example, will, knowledge and action. Also *tāntrika* theism finds its best expression in its idea of liberation. It does not, as do the Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Vedānta, look at liberation as an escape from life in the world; rather it considers liberation as an actual enjoyment of the bliss which the liberated (*jīvanmukta*) experiences by recognizing (*pratyabhijñā*) his essential nature as being non-different (*abheda*) from that of Śiva. Whatever methods the *tāntrikas* may use, whether they be meditational or ritualistic, the aim is to gain access to that bliss which stems from the experience of union.

The assertion of the *tāntrikas* that Being is not a mere undifferentiated mass of consciousness but I-consciousness and that the world is not a mere shadow but an acutal manifestation of the Absolute, leads them to conclude that the world really exists, although contingently, outside of consciousness. The world, figuratively speaking, may thus be said to be the body of God. Since the world is vomitted out of the Absolute, it means that the activities of the Absolute are necessarily cosmic in character. It also means that the Absolute, as do the Vedāntins, is not a mere passive witness, but is actively engaged in the activities it itself initiates. What it amounts to saying is that the Absolute as consciousness is continuously active, because it is the very nature of consciousness to be conscious of something. The nature of a conscious being, thus, is to be conscious. To be conscious of something involves reflection—and reflection denotes both knowledge and action. The Absolute as consciousness, in respect of knowledge and action, must be *a priori* fully free (*paripūrṇa svātantrya*). Tantrism speaks of the Absolute as Supreme on account of its absolute freedom, which means freedom is identical with the absoluteness of the Absolute.

Since the Absolute is not merely a mass (*ghaṇa*) of consciousness but I-consciousness, it expresses itself, through its energetic powers, in the form of subject, means of experience and the object of experience at all the levels of existence. The power of the Absolute is not blind or haphazard; it is consciousness itself, or, should we say, consciousness itself is power. The Universal Consciousness emits out of itself the phenomena through its innate power of emission. This emission is similar to the one that occurs at the height of orgasm. As the material universe is nothing but the emission of the Divine, it would thus be wrong to assert that matter is insentient. What looks to be insentient, at the surface level, is impercetibly filled by the presence of Divine Energy. It is on account of this understanding of matter that the *tāntrikas* look at the Earth as Mother. The Earth as Mother has been identified with the Supreme Goddess (*parā-śakti*). It is the Goddess who is seen as representing the dynamism, fecundity of the Absolute.

In looking at the Goddess as being identical with the dynamic aspect of the Absolute, *tāntrikas* thereby look at Reality in terms of bi-polar unity, which, at the philosophical level, is termed as luminosity (*prakāśa*) and dynamism (*vimarśa*) and, at the religious level, is termed as Śiva and Śakti. These two aspects of the Absolute are seen to be the embodiment of passivity as well as of dynamism. As and when the process of withdrawal or dissolution is perfected, it is the passive aspect which is said to be dominant. Likewise when the process of universal emission or expansion is completed, it is the dynamic aspect which gains ascendancy. Both these processes of passivity and dynamism are experienced by the yogī upon the attainment of liberation.

CONSCIOUSNESS AS A UNITY

The goal of Tantrism is the same which all the religions the world over cherish—and that is to enable man to gain soteric salvation/liberation. Tantrism, however, differs in its conception of liberation from other religions. It does not advocate the belief that liberation is either an escape from life itself or the disappearance of an individual being into an unknown abyss. It looks at liberation as a kind of orgasmic bliss which the individual should be enabled to experience continuously. Tantrism also differs from other religions insofar as religious praxis is concerned. It believes that the pleasures of the body or of the senses are as valid means as any other ascetical practice. Further Tantrism thinks that none can comprehend Reality unless we radically reverse (*paravṛtti*) our mental dispositions in the context of life in the world. Insofar as the events of life as well as of the world and its entities are viewed from a limited intellectual horizon, to that extent we shall be experiencing limitation of will, knowledge and action. On account of the limiting conditions (*malas*)[1] of empirical life, there is a tendency of identifying consciousness, whose essential nature is identical with the Transcendent Consciousness (*parā-saṁvid*), with the limitations of the body, the senses, and the psychic apparatus (*antaḥkaraṇa*).

Tantrism makes it clear that the individual, prior to the search for enlightenment, must undergo a radical transformation. In what does, it may be asked, this change or transformation consist of? Actual and authentic transformation, assert the *tāntrikas*, is realized the moment the seeker attains to complete interiority (*antaṛatvā*). *Tāntrikas* lay much emphasis upon interiority on account of their belief that everything is internal (*antarārthavāda*),[2] which means that the so-called external has its basis in the internal. In actual practice it means that the objective world, at the time of the Divine expansion, comes out from the Universal Consciousness and returns unto it when the movement of withdrawal is initiated. Both these universal processes of expansion and contraction are experienced by the yogī internally upon gaining mastery over the techniques of visualization. What this all amounts to saying is this: What exists potentially or actually exists within consciousness. As the centre and abode of that which is existent, so consciousness, being perfect and full in itself, maintains within itself all the objective realms that it projects out of itself.[3] As to whether objective entities are real or unreal depends to what extent they are experienced as manifestation (*ābhāsa*) of consciousness. A *tāntrika* cognizes the reality of the objective realm the moment he comes to know that all objectivity exists within consciousness. The transcendent knowledge which a *tāntrika* has is acquired either by merging all objectivity into the ocean of subjectivity or by looking at the objective realm as a grossification of consciousness. In other words, the outer is nothing but the expression of the inner.

It is the fundamental and *a priori* assertion of Tantrism that which is outer, or what we call the objective world, is non-differnt from consciousness due to the fact that it is the innate nature of that which is inward to be comprehensive. Whatever takes place in the outer universe is, in fact, happening within consciousness itself.[4] So it means that nothing exists apart from consciousness. The revelation or the knowledge of an object, according to Tantrism, can be accounted only in terms of identity of the object of knowledge with consciousness. If it is, for example, assumed that the object of perception is totally external to consciousness, then we are in such a blind alley that we can never have the cognition of the object. The object of cognition or consciousness must have a relationship, and only then can we expect to have some form of knowledge. It is what Abhinavagupta has to say on this topic:

> The existence or non-existence of phenomena with the domain of the empirical (*iha*) cannot be established unless they rest within consciousness. In fact, phenomena, which rest within consciousness, are revealing (*prakāśamāna*). And the fact of their revealing is itself their oneness (*abheda*) with consciousness, because consciousness is nothing but the fact of appearing (*prakāśa*). If one were to say that they were separate from the light of (consciousness) and that they appeared (it would amount to saying that) "blue" is separate from its own nature. However, (insofar as it appears and is known as such) one says: "This is blue." Thus, in this sense, (phenomena) rest in consciousness; they are not separate from consciousness.[5]

Consciousness, according to Tantrism, is not a passive entity. It is dynamic on account of its vibratory (*spanda*) nature. It is on account of its vibratory nature that consciousness manifests or reveals itself, through the acts of perception, as its own object.[6] Upon the completion of the act of perception, consciousness assimilates the object and turns it back on itself by withdrawing to its undifferentiated state:

> Knowledge (*jñāna*) manifests internally and externally as each individual entity. . . . Once knowledge has assumed that form it falls back (into itself).[7]

Although idealistic in intent and content, Tantrism in its Kashmiri form accepts realism as a valid means of knowledge. Its realism comes to the fore when it, unlike the Advaita Vedānta, affirms the existence of that which is manifest. The theory of causality which Tantrism upholds is realistic in orientation, in that it believes that the effect, prior to its actualization, exists potentially in the cause. With regard to the manifestation of universe it means that the universe, prior to its actualization as an effect, exists in an unmanifest condition in the cause, which is Śiva. The manifest world, according to this understanding, is real because, prior to its manifestation, it exists in the cause, which is Śiva. When this realism is interpreted in idealistic terms, it denotes that the world is but the expansion of consciousness. The grossification of the world occurs when consciousness, upon the initiation of the movement of expansion, gets concealed (*styāna*), or should we say that the process of concealment of consciousness is initiated the moment consciousness grossifies itself as the material world. Tantrism at the same time maintains that there occurs no change or division within consciousness when it projects itself as the world. As consciousness is full in itself, so it means that the emission of the universe is the overflowing of the Absolute. As cause and effect are identical, so the manifest world and the Absolute, too, are said to be non-different. This identity between the two also means that matter is not at all insentient, because every aspect of matter is pervaded by the Universal Consciousness. It is Śiva as subject who perceives himself as the object, which in this case is the world. As it is Śiva who is both the subject as well as the object, so he alone is considered to be absolutely real.[8] Accordingly comments Somānanda:

> The jar knows because it is of my nature, and I know it becasue I am of the jar's nature. I know because I am of Śadāśiva's nature and He knows because He is of my nature; Yajñadatta (knows) because he is of Śiva's nature and Śiva (knows) because He is of Yajñadatta's nature.[9]

This idealistic theory of knowledge tells us that it is not the individual subject who perceives the object. Rather it is the Universal Subject (Śiva) who is the real perceiver. In cognizing the object directly (*pratyakṣa*), consciousness thereby unifies the knowable into itself. What it amounts to saying is this: Cognition is the fundamental activity of consciousness, and this activity is universal in nature. While remaining indivisible in itself, consciounsess in the process of cognition differentiates (*bheda*) one object from the other. It is through the process of mutual exclusion (*anyonyābhāva*) that differentiation, at the empirical level, is affected or made actual. As to why the perception of difference occurs among the objects is because of the difference of qualities of the objects. Inspite of the difference of qualities, the objects, however, remain unified in the purview of a single cognition insofar as they are manifest.

It is the content of perception which constitutes the essence (*rasa*) or own-being (*svabhāva*) of the knowable. Whatever differences are encountered at the empirical level, they are all, at the transcendental level, burnt in the furnace of consciousness. So says Maheśvarānanda:

> The Supreme Lord's unique state of emotivity (*asādhāraṇa-bhāva*) is the outpouring of pure Being (*mahāsattā*). It is manifest as the brilliance (*sphurattā*) of the universe which, if we ponder deeply, (is realized to be) the single flavour (*ekarasa*) of the essence of Beauty which is vibration of the bliss of one's own nature.[10]

CONSCIOUSNESS AS LIGHT AND AWARENESS

When the Absolute as I-consciousness is said to be the basis (*ādhāra*) of everything that is phenomenal, it is then referred to as pure luminosity (*prakāśa*). Since consciousness is not a passive entity, it is, thus, seen to be engaged constantly in the creative reflection (*vimarśa*) of its own nature. These two aspects—*prakāśa* and *vimarśa*—constitute together the all-inclusive fullness of I-consciousness. Light or luminosity (*bhāna*) is that aspect of consciousness which is responsible in revealing the manifest nature of objects. Accordingly luminosity constitutes the essence and identity of that which is manifest.[11] Things reveal themselves according to their nature (*svabhāva*), and this revelation is made possible by the light of cosciousness. The light of consciousness not only reveals the objects, but is their very foundation and source. This revealing activity is carried out by consciousness through its innate vibratory power (*spanda-śakti*). It is on account of this innate pulsation that consciousness both manifests as well as obscures the objects when it engages in the activity of expansion and withdrawal. As revelation of the outer occurs on account of luminosity, so consciousness accordingly constitutes the oneness (*aikātmya*) of the diversity of the manifest. The world, therefore, is said to be the shining of the light of consciousness. All the manifest forms are but the radiant vibration (*sphurattā*) of the light of consciousness. It is the state (*avasthā*) of objectivity through which consciousness, as it were, reveals itself.[12]

Although the light of consciousness is said to be the source of that which is phenomenal, it does not mean that consciousness obliterates itself by merging in the object it manifests. When an object is perceived, it is of the nature of "I perceive this." The perception we have is not of the object. What happens is this: Cognition of the object occurs to the extent the object reveals itself as a luminous principle of experience.[13] As the light of consciousness, while revealing the objects, suffers from no internal or external division, so it exists always in the present (*vartamānarūpa*). Being transcendent to space and time, so consciousness remains constantly free from the division that is constitutive of the phenomenal diversity. It is the light of consciousness which illumines the objects, and on account of this illumination they become the entities of our experience. As the light pertains to I-consciousness, so it cannot be termed as being impersonal. Light, therefore, is said to be identical with the Absolute itself.[14] Śiva as pure luminosity is compared to the lamp that eradicates darkness, and it is Śiva as light who reveals everything.[15] Accordingly says Abhinavagupta:

> Thus Bhairava (Śiva), the Light, is self-evident (*svataḥ-siddha*), without beginning. He is the first and the last of all things, the Eternal Present. And so what also can be said of him? The unfolding of the categories of existence (*tattva*) and creation, which are the expansion of His own Self, He illumines, luminous with His own Light, in identity with Himself, and because He illumines Himself, so too He reflects on His own nature, without His own wonder (*camatkāra*) being in any way diminished.[16]

This understanding of Reality is very akin to that school of Christian mysticism which is Platonist in nature. One of the leading lights of this school, namely, Dionysius the Aeropagite, speak of God thus:

> (God) being One (who) communicates His unity into every part of the world and also unto the Whole, both unto that which is one and that which is many. He is one and unchangeable in a superessential manner, being neither a multiplicity of things, nor yet the sum total of such units. . . . He is a unity in a manner far different from this. . . . He is indivisible plurality, insatiable, yet brimful, producing, perfecting and maintaining all unity and plurality.[17]

Insofar as the dynamic aspect of consciousness is concerned, it is reflected in the flow of cognitions it has. This dynamism of consciousness as light comes to be on account of its innate movement, which is like a throb (*spanda*). This throb constitutes the noetic activity (*jñānātmika-*

kriyā) of consciousness. It means that consciousness is both the conscious agent (*kartṛ*) as well as the knower. From this it is concluded that the possibility of knowledge exists on account of the subject, which means that apart from the subject knowledge has no possibility to emerge. Further, it means that knowledge is contingent upon the object, whereas the object is dependent on the subject. All this amounts to saying is that it is the subject who relates the object to knowledge and knowledge to the object. These three aspects of cognition, subject, object and knowledge, are said to be identical, in that all of them are present whenever cognition of an object occurs.

As and when consciousness, through the means of will, assumes any form of awareness (*vimarśa*), there is made manifest the dynamic aspect of consciousness. The movement of consciousness from the state of uncreate Being to that of Becoming is a creative movement. This movement implies that consciousness is never static. It is always on the move, or in motion. That which is in motion denotes its becoming nature. Thus the inner luminosity of consciousness is reflected in the outer manifestation of becoming, which means that Being reappears continuously and constantly. The universal (*sāmānya*) nature of Being is reflected or made manifest through the revelation of each phenomena. We may, in analogous terms, say that Being and Becoming are the inner and outer aspects of the Universal Consciousness, and which spontaneously is expressed as the "this" of the Divine Polarity.[18] The inner face (*antarmukha*) of consciousness is the pure subject, which is beyond all the phenomenal categories on account of it being free from all forms of objectivity. Insofar as the outer face (*bahirmukha*) of consciousness is concerned, it is marked by diversity as well as by change which is the characteristic feature of that which is manifest. Interiority denotes unity, whereas externality denotes diversity and change.

As the universe is nothing but the extension of Śiva, so the world of wonderful (*vicitratā*) diversity is seen to represent the nature of the Lord itself. Śiva manifests himself as the universe when he reflects on himself and thinks: "I am diverse."[19] The yogī who has reached the depths of interiority recognizes that the expansion (*vikāsa*) of Śiva as the universe of diversity is identical with the expansion of his own consciousness. This expansion of yogī's consciousness explains "the dawning of absolute reality to the exclusion of the external world."[20] Accordingly informs Kṣemarāja:

> The state of cosmic contraction (*nimeṣa*) is identical with the state of expansion (*unmeṣa*) even though (the universe reverts to a pure con-

sciousness) which assimilates everything within itself to form an undivided unity.[21]

When entities emanate from consciousness, their emission is spontaneous. The source, which is consciousness, does not suffer, while giving rise to entities, from any lack of cohesion or unity. The universal manifestation (*ābhāsa*) within I-consciousness occurs when the movement of expansion is initiated or activated. The ontic reality of the emergent diversity is real on account of it being the emission of the Real. To say that the universe is the actual emission of the Real would mean that consciousness, while giving rise to the phenomenal diversity, undergoes change and modification (*pariṇāma*). But the Kashmiri Śaivite *tāntrikas* do not accept that the Real suffers from any change while emitting out of itself the objective world of multiplicity. On this contentious issue this is what Abhinavagupta has to say:

> (A real transformation of cause into effect) entails the obscuring of the preceding form (of the changing substance) and the coming into being of another. In the case of the light of consciousness this is impossible because it has no other form. (Moreover), if (the light of consciousness) were to be obscured (the entire universe) would be as if blind. Again, (if the new form) were other than the light of consciousness, it could not appear. In either case the universe (could not be perceived and hence) would be as if asleep, (which runs contrary to our) experience.[22]

If it is accepted that the effect is the actual transformation of the cause, then this transformation can be of two types: Either it would be complete destruction of the cause, or there would be transformation only of qualities and not of the substantial cause. In the first case of transformation the destruction of the cause would be the same which takes place when wood is burnt into ashes. In this case the cause, which is the wood, disappears when it is burnt and reduced to ashes, which is the effect. This kind of causality is totally rejected by the *tāntrikas*. In the second type of causal transformation the substantial cause remains the same and only the qualities (*dharmas*) undergo change. It is this type of causality which is acceptable to *tāntrikas*.

The process of manifestation from Śiva to objective universe occurs in terms of descent. While descending towards the manifest universe, the absolute I-consciousness imposes upon itself the condition of self-limitation (*rodhana*). The descent, which is identical with the process of manifestation, does not occur spontaneously. The different categories of existence (*tattvas*) emerge out of I-consciousness progressively through a single causal chain. Each category of existence is the effect of the preceding one, which becomes a constituent cause for the subsequent category. In this causal analysis of manifestation every emergent category exists potentially in the preceding one. What it means is this: Effect, prior to its actualization, exists potentially in the cause, which means that it is cause itself which terminates in the effect. This process of the cause transforming itself into the effect is explained by Abhinavagupta thus:

> Thus, even though the final element (in the series) is such as it is, it nonetheless contains within itself all the other countless aspects which, step by step, precede it and are encompassed by it in such a way that they are inseparable from its own nature. (Consciousness) thus illumines and contemplates itself as full and perfect (*pūrṇa*). The members which precede (any given phase) likewise have their being in the same reflective awareness and light of consciousness which, full and perfect, has already unfolded through the succeeding members. Thus, (none of the phases) are divorced from the fullness of consciousness and they embrace all other members which precede them and forcibly induce them to form a part of their own nature. Each of these phases illumining itself thus, and reflecting on its own nature, is full and perfect.[23]

The absolute I-consciousness, when resting in pure luminosity, remains in the state of pure tranquillity. It is a state of withdrawal or what may be called interiority. It is Śiva who represents or embodies this aspect of the Absolute. When the I-consciousness, on account of its innate energetic power (*spanda-śakti*), engages in the process of universal manifestation, it is the dynamic aspect of Reality, and is accordingly represented by Śakti. These two aspects of Reality are also termed as male and female, passive and active, Being and Becoming, etc. This polarization of Reality is not, however, viewed by Tantrism as being antithetical in nature. This polarity is ultimately resolved in the unity of the Absolute where no pairs exist. The Absolute is said to subsist in its own transcendent unity and identity. When the Absolute expresses itself in terms of diversity of creation, it does accomplish this task through its own internal powers. The relationship that exists between the polar aspects of Reality is the same which occurs between fire and heat. Śakti may be seen as the power of God. It is through this innate power that God carries out his act of creation.

THE DIVINE POLARITY

The Divine Polarity, at the empirical level, is spoken of as Śiva and Śakti. Śakti is the pulsating energy of Śiva, that is, of God. It is through this energy that the Absolute manifests itself as the universe, and thereby is realized the divine presence in creation. It is on account of immanence that God (Śiva) becomes an experiencer. Śiva is also spoken of as Bhairava and Śakti as Emission (*visarga*). While explaining the concept of Śiva as Bhairava and of Śakti as Emission, Abhinavagupta says the following:

> Bhairava and His power of emission constitute the couple (*yāmala*). One member (Bhairava) rests in His own eternal unchanging nature, and is therefore called 'repose' (*viśrāma*). The other is His primordial vibration (*prathama-spanda*), and is therefore called emergence (*udaya*).[24]

Śiva and Śakti constantly merge with, and separate from, each other in the process of manifestation and withdrawal of the universe. The universe ceases to exist for the yogī when the Kuṇḍalinī, upon her arousal, unites with Śiva. The union of the two denotes the withdrawal or dissolution of that which is manifest. Likewise the emission or manifestation of the manifest comes to be when Śiva and Śakti separate from each other. Thus both the cosmic lysis as well as emergence correspond to the separation and union of the Divine Couple. The emergence of the universe occurs on account of the pulsating throb, which is said to be of blissful nature. As the human couple separate at the end of orgasm, likewise separate Śiva and Śakti when the orgasmic emission is actualized. And the result of this emission is the emergence of the universe. This process of universal emergence is experienced by the yogī at the height of absorption. Consequently the yogī understands that the innate nature of consciousness is characterized by pulsation, and on account of this pulsation it moves between the transcendental bliss of Śiva and the dazzling emission of his immanent power, which is Śakti. The entire cosmic drama is experienced by the yogī within himself in terms of the vibration of the highest Subject. Concerning the bliss of the cosmic orgasm we are told:

> Just as a female ass or mare (in orgasm) enters into the delight (of her own) Abode, the Temple of Bliss, repeatedly expanding and contracting and is overjoyed in her own heat, so (the yogī) must establish himself in the Bhairava couple, expanding and contracting, full of all things, dissolved and created by them again and again.[25]

The dissolution of the universe denotes the contraction of Śakti whereas the emergence of the universe explains the process of expansion of Śiva. When there is contraction of Śiva, then there occurs the expansion of Śakti. When the yogī experiences both these processes of expansion and contraction, he is said to have reached the highest mystical state in terms of the pulsating rhythm of the Divine Couple (*yāmala-bhāva*). It is through this experience that the yogī discovers that the Absolute is both Śiva and Śakti, and yet neither of them. The union of Śiva and Śakti may be termed as a movement of awareness from one to another. Both Śiva and Śakti reflect each other in the same way as do two facing mirrors. Both of them, thus, penetrate each other when in union. When this analogy is transferred onto the plane of consciousness, it means that consciousness reflects upon itself both as Śiva and Śakti.[26] The relationship of the Couple may be explained thus: Śiva is the cosmic Subject, whereas Śakti is the cosmic Object.

Śiva is divine precisely because of his pulsating nature. The Absolute of Tantrism is not an impersonal principle. Śiva as Absolute is personal on account of its Egoity, or what is called I-consciousness. That which is impersonal cannot give rise to anything. This is not the case with Śiva. He appears as the manifest universe through his creative awareness or power. Thus the entire universe, including the physical body, the senses and the mind, are considered in Tantrism as being a theophany.[27] It is because of this belief that Tantrism upholds that "there is no state in word, meaning or thought, either at the beginning, middle or end, that is not Śiva"[28] So every act of an individual is seen as a kind of cosmic liturgy of Śiva, which means that whatever one does in terms of action or thought is seen to be identical with that of Śiva. It is, therefore, Śiva who is the sacred ground upon which the cosmic *maṇḍala* is drawn:

> The variety of this world can only manifest if the Highest Lord, who is essentially pure light of consciousness, exists, just as a surface is necessary for a picture. If external objects were perceived in isolation, then because 'blue' and 'yellow', etc., are self-confined and the perception we (have of them) refer to their objects alone and so are insentient, mute and dumb in relation to one another . . . how would it be possible to be aware that an object is variegated? But just as depths and elevations can be represented by lines on a smooth wall, and we perceive (a female figure and think): 'She has a deep navel and upraised breasts', similarly it is possible to be aware of difference in the variegated (contents of experience) only if all the diverse perceptions are connected together on the one wall of the universal light of consciousness.[29]

IDENTITY BETWEEN MACROCOSM AND MICROCOSM

One of the central facts concerning Tantrism that we have learnt so far is this: Since everything is the self-extension of Śiva himslef, so it means that there is no essential difference between the phenomenal entities, which represent the microcosm, and Śiva, who is the embodiment of the macrocosm. Whatever differences are perceived between the microcosm and the macrocosm, they are epistemic, and are transcended upon gaining access to the yogic absorption. Epistemic differences exist, say the *tāntrikas,* on account of the fact that the atomized individual suffers from the limitation of knowledge.[30] When the field of knoweldge is expanded, it is realized that the microcosm is essentially the same as the macrocosm. From this understanding is concluded that each part of the Whole expresses the fullness of the Whole.[31] What it amounts to saying is this: Each object not only expresses the fullness of Śiva, but is filled with it. Since the entities that constitute the world participate in the fullness of the Whole, so Being and Becoming accordingly may be seen as the two sides of the same coin.

It is this belief of the *tāntrikas*—the Whole exists in the parts and the parts in the Whole—which has determined the the attitude of Tantrism towards the human body. The fundamental belief of the *tāntrikas* concerning the body is this: They consider it to be sacred on account it being the emission of the Divine. As the symbol of divine sacrality, the body not only participates in that which is transcendentally holy and atemporal, but also is said to be the container and carrier of divine I-consciousness.[32] It is necessary to point out that Tantrism identifies I-consciousness with Being, and it is through the body that the luminous nature of being is revealed. Why? Because consciousness cannot express itself apart from the body. It is in and through the body that Being as consciousness is apprehended. The body shares in the sacred nature of Being on account it being the product as well as the carrier of Being. It is this attitude towards the gross, the physical or tangible which is responsible in developing a healthy view among the *tāntrikas* concerning the world, and thereby for the body. As they do not look down upon the body as being degenerate, so they consider it to be the sole means of experiencing the delight, which could either be spiritual or sensual.

As consciousness is dependent upon the body, so body too in equal measure is dependent upon consciousness, which means that it is not possible for the body to exist apart from consciousness. The absence of consciousness would denote the death of the body. The body exists not only because it is pervaded by consciousness, but also because it is the extension of I-consciousness. So *tāntrikas* say that the body must be seen as the actual and concrete temple of God.[33]

It is on account of sacrality that worship to God is offered in the temple. The temple is viewed to be occupying sacred space because it is pervaded by the divine presence of God. Temple is that enclosed sacred space wherein the impurities of the conditioned space-time do not exist. When the worshipper, in the enclosed space of the temple, offers worship unto God, he thereby experiences an existential catharsis in terms of which he gains a new birth. Analogously speaking, the *tāntrikas* think that the body, as the carrier as well as the revealer of consciousness, is an enclosed sacred space which is pervaded by the presence of God. As we offer worship unto God in a temple, likewise this body is a place wherein we offer sacrificial worship unto the Lord. The initimacy between the cosmos and God is well reflected in the union of the body and consciousness. We know our body only through consciousness, and consciousness as awareness expresses itself only through the body. This intimacy between consciousness and matter denotes that the material world is not away from God. The cognition of the objective world is possible because it is grounded in consciousness, and its existence is real and actual. That which does not exist cannot be cognized. We cognize the material world on account it being made manifest by consciousness. The unity of body and consciousness is expressed by Abhinavagupta in the following words:

> Thus, one should think of the body as full of all the Paths (*adhvan*) (to enlightenment and cosmic emanation). Variegated by the workings of time, it is the abode of all movements of time and space. The body seen in this way is all the gods, and must therefore be the object of contemplation, veneration and sacrifice. He who penetrates into it finds liberation.[34]

The above words of Abhinava tell us that the human body, or, for that matter, any material entity, is nothing but the grossification of absolute I-consciousness. Since the body, at the empirical level, expresses itself as a material entity, it accordingly is said to be in possession of all those divine powers which are ascribed to the Absolute. As the receptacle of divine powers, the body is thus seen to be having all such possibilities which terminate in the enlightenment of liberation. The seeker is asked to venerate the body on account of its divine character. From this it may be concluded that the body, as the extension of the Absolute, is identical with consciousness insofar as its essential nature is concerned. As the material entities are seen as the emission of the Lord, so they are accordingly considered to be ontically real and actual realities. As such they reflect the divine glory of the Lord. The Absolute expresses its activities through the Laws of Nature. As the presence of consciousness in the body is experienced through the movement of limbs, likewise the presence of God in the world is encountered through its motion. This understanding concerning the relationship between the physical and the non-physical tells us that God is not separate from us; rather he is within us, and we are simply his extension. The relationship between God and the world is the same which occurs between the body and consciousness:

> Just as ego (*asmitā*) in the body flings apart the two lifeless arms by a mere act of will, so (the Universal Ego) in the universe (rends asunder) mountains by its power.[35]

This ontology of Tantrism tells us in clear terms that there is a mutual dependence of entities upon each other, which means that everything is in everything. The sense of difference or of separation, which is experienced empirically, is due to our non-knowing as to what we really are. The moment a yogī grasps that all things in the world are the limbs of his own body, that very moment he plunges into the plenitude of his own Being. It is the very act of introversion which enables the yogī to proclaim: "I am this (that is, the entire cosmos)" (*aham-idam*). The realization of unity between the outer and the inner, between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between consciousness and matter paves the way for the yogī to actualize unity between *my consciousness* and transcendent consciousness. Through this knowledge of unity the particularity of the body is transcended. Instead of my body, the yogī realizes that the particular human body is but the reflection of the *cosmic body* of the supreme Being which is all-pervasive. To the extent a yogī identifies himself with his particular body, to that extent he remains tied to the peg of bondage. When he, upon transcending particularity, has the experience of the pervasion of I-consciousness, he overcomes the sense of difference between the subject and the object. It is a state which, according to the *Śivasūtra,*[36] terminates in the blending of the inner and the outer like the juice in the peacock's egg.

THE LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The Tāntrika tradition upholds the view that there are levels of consciousness. Each level of consciousness is determined by the progress one has spiritually made. At the lowest level, for example, consciousness expresses itself in and through gross forms, and the level of apprehension accordingly is of limited nature. Empirical level of consciousness is, therefore, considered by the *tāntrikas* as being of the lowest category. Consciousness, at this level, operates superficially. At this level of understanding man has no control over his mental processes. A yogī gains mastery over the mental processes to the extent he is able to climb the "living ladder of consciousness."[37] What it means is this: The mastery over the mental processes is dependent to what degree the yogī penetrates the essence of the object, which means to what extent the yogī has succeeded in plunging into the depths of consciousness. It is this penetration or inwardness which determines the quality of a yogī's spirituality.

Spirituality for a *tāntrika* has two aspects: One aspect is that of interiority and the other is that of acquirement of supernatural powers. A yogī gains access to supernatual powers to the degree he has been able to effect introversion of consciousness. The introversion of consciousness is, at the same time, related to the metaphor of ascension of the ladder of consciousness. As he ascends the spiritual ladder of consciousness, the yogī simultaneously gains control over the various world-orders (*bhuvanas*). It is this spiritual ascension which enables a yogī to have an access to a new space within Being. While living in this new space, the yogī makes use of his physical body only for living purposes. He is henceforth no more bound to the limitations of his embodied existence. While arriving at the ultimate state of existence, which is that of Paramaśiva, the yogī thereby does not look at his body as a particular body. He looks at it in cosmic terms, that is, he cosmicizes his body by transcending the realm of particularity. Upon the cosmicization of the body, the yogī thereby experiences the totality of all the world-orders within his own consciousness. While internalizing all objectivity, the yogī thereby discovers that nothing exists apart from consciousness. Whatever objectivity is experienced as discrete and particular has its ground in consciousness. Accordingly is the Absolute termed as a mass of conscious body (*dehavijñāna*). As this body is the reflection of the Absolute, so it is seen by yogī as the holy image (*mūrti*) of the Divine.[38] As this human body is the actual image of the Divine Body, so it is said to be in possession of all such transcendental powers like fecundity (*vīrya*), strength (*bala*), vitality (*ojas*), and the power of vibration (*spanda*).[39] The Divine Body as a mass of consciousness is in no manner related to matter, as the latter signifies limitation and restriction, whereas the former is infinite as well as free from all limiting conditions. As freedom and power are the nature of the Divine Body, so it is referred to as the Body of Power (*śaktideha*). It is as the Body of Power that the Absolute is said to be in possession of five cosmic powers, which are the power of bliss (*ānanda-śakti*), the power of will (*icchā-śakti*), the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*), the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*), and the power of consciousness (*cit-śakti*).

The transcendental bliss of the Divine Body is experienced by the yogī in and through his own body when he realizes the festival (*utsava*) of the universal emission. The objective concretization of the Divine Body presupposes that the pure vibration (*vibhūti-spanda*) is revealed through the world. It means that it is through the medium of the world that the glory of God is disclosed. It is through the wonder of the material entities that the transcendental joy is experienced. The greatest hindrance in the way of experiencing the absolute joy of the Divine is to consider the world, including the human body, as being profane. To the extent the human body is considered as being impure, to that extent shall one experience the deficiency of bliss. It is on account of the idea of impurity that the natural relationship between the body and consciousness is not correctly understood. It is on account of the idea of impurity that we are unable to enjoy our own body. It is the sincere belief of *tāntrikas* that this negative attitude towards the body must be given up if proper fruits of spiritual bliss are to be enjoyed.[40] The real joy will be experienced, say the *tāntrikas,* the moment the physical body is seen as a concrete image of the Divine. So the human body must be viewed as the extension of I-consciousness:

> Once the tendency (*aunmukhya*) (to see the external) objects ceases and limitation is destroyed, what remains is the body apart from the nectar (*rasa*) of Śiva's bliss. (Thus) seeing and worshipping the body day and night as replete with (all) categories of existence and full of the nectar of Śiva's Bliss, (the yogī) becomes identified with Śiva. Established in the holy image (*liṅga*), content to rest in (his) cosmic body, (the yogī) does not aspire to any outer *liṅga,* (to make any) vows, (travel to) the sacred sites or practice (external) discipline.[41]

THE YOGĪ'S ASCENSION

The ascension of the yogī on the living ladder of consciousness is a double-edged movement, in that the yogī, on the one hand, moves upwards and, on the other, dissociates himself from the lower states of existence. The upward movement also signifies that, while moving towards the height, the yogī transforms simultaneously the lower states into those states that are superior and higher. The recognition that the microcosm is non-different from the macrocosm depends to what extent a yogī, on the one hand, has moved upwards and, one the other, how much or to what degree he has plunged or submerged into the depths of his own consciousness. In this process of height and depth a yogī no more looks at his body as a heap of material elements. Rather he attempts to transform the materiality of the body into a *body of consciousness*. It is the contention of Tantrism that the materiality of the body is considered to be ultimately true by them who are ignorant concerning the nature of the Real. The real nature of the body, say the *tāntrikas,* is spiritual on account of it having its basis in consciousness, which by nature is spiritual and non-material. Matter is nothing but the flashing forth of consciousness. The experience of the body as a mass of consciousness denotes its nature to be cosmic, which means that the limited ego is not as limited as it finds itself to be, but is as unlimited as is the Universal Consciousness. As to how material entities are transformed into consciousness is by melting them in the furnace of consciousness itself. It is by negating the materialness of matter that difference between matter and non-matter is realized. Upon transcending the realm of duality, the yogī realizes that it is the vibratory energy which, in the form of ego, performs all the activities in and of the world. What it means is this: The individual ego has its ontic ground in the energy of consciousness. In transforming everything into consciousness, a yogī thereby transcends the limitations of materiality, which actually means that he is no more bound by the fruits (effects) of *karman.* He is said to be liberated from all the shackles which his outer materiality entails.[42]

Insofar as the idea—*this is my body*—is entertained, there will be experienced, to that measure, the sense of difference or separation. It is upon gaining the awareness of the body as *I am my body* that the yogī really has the experience of non-duality. The state of self-awareness as non-dual is arrived at when, in the fire of consciousness (*cidagni*), the thought-constructs (*vikalpa*) are reduced to ashes. It is in the burning of that which is gross that the real spiritual transformation is accomplished, and the process of burning is carried out through what the *tāntrikas* call contemplative awareness. It is an awareness in which the yogī proclaims: "It is I, the Great Lord, as pure consciousness, who always shines thus as all things."[43] It is a state of complete introversion in which the empirical consciousness disappears (*samāveśa*) in Śiva's consciousness. The compenetration results in the glow and brilliance (*sphurattā*) which is termed as Divine. It is this glow of consciousness which is spoken of as

Divine Energy. It is an energy which, in the form of a *mantra,* burns away the body of thoughts (*saṁkalpa-vikalpa*). The burning of thoughts for the yogī signifies the fire of sacrifice into which oblations unto deities are offered. The fire of consciousness is equated with the fire of sacrifice on account of the fact that the physical body, or that which is of the form of matter, is offered as an oblation into it. This entire play of oblation into the fire of consciousness is enacted inwardly. Upon successfully offering inwardly the material entities into the fire of consciousness, the yogī thereby arrives at the state of awareness whereby is obliterated the sense of difference between the subject and the object, which normally is experienced at the empirical level. This experience of non-difference denotes that all forms of objectivity disappear, and what remains is pure subjectivity. This is what Abhinavagupta has to say concerning this:

> Oblation is effortlessly offered in the fire of (Śiva's) flaming consciousness by offering fully all of the great seed of internally and externally created duality.[44]

What kind of offerings, it may be asked, are offered in the supernal (*alaukika*) flaming fire of consciousness? The offerings that are made unto the supernal fire of consciousness are those of difference, or, should we say, of the opposites, or of that which is antithetical, or characterized by contrast or exclusion. In offering the oblation of dualities into the fire of consciousness, the yogī thereby makes himself free from all forms of limitations and attachments. Accordingly the yogī arrives at the state of compenetration, which is a state of complete oneness and non-duality. What does happen, it may be asked, to the yogī's body at this juncture of experience when the consciousness of body as being particular disappears? It is asserted that the yogī at this juncture discards the old body. The new body he has is a glorified one, or the one which is a transfigured one, or the one which is a deified one. Although living an embodied existence, the yogī, however, is no more bound by it, nor is he shackled by it. The yogī, on account of the deified body, transcends all that which phenomenal physicality entails. The yogī, upon acquiring the deified body (*divya-śarīra*), discovers the pulsation of Divine Energy within.[45] Abiding in the repose of transcendence, there occur no more within the yogī the waves of manifestation (*nistraṅga*), which means that the empirical individuality disappears in the infinite ocean of cosmic consciousness.

When the yogī abides in the repose of consciousness, there emerges the first throb within which is of the nature of immaculate body (*mūrti*) of consciousness.[46] Although the emergence of this throb is differenceless, yet its orientation is towards difference in terms of which the arising of objectivity is facilitated. As it is the innate nature of consciousness to express itself by going outside of itself, so its activity becomes manifest only through objective forms. It is this innate active nature of consciousness which is termed as Śakti. When the yogī has the experience of union of Śiva and Śakti within himself, he thereby also has the experience of the unfoldment of Śiva's cosmic body, which, in *tāntrika* terminology, is seen to be the extension of the yogī's deified body. This drama of expansion or outward projection is experienced by the yogī within his own consciousness, and is spoken of as pure creation (*śuddha-sṛṣṭi*). The state of expansion/emission is technically equated with the state of Bhairava.[47] The state of Bhairava is marked both by unity and diversity in the oneness of pulsating throb. What it practically means is this: The yogī really experiences within his own deified body the emergence of the universe.

THE TECHNIQUES OF DEIFICATION

When the yogī meditates upon the powers of consciousness (*citi*), he directs his attention to the centre of his body. The powers of consciousness are said to be identical with the radiant Fire of Time (*kālāgni*). It is in the blazing Fire of Time in which the yogī, through abstract absorption, burns the categories of existence. In burning the categories of existence in the Fire of Time the yogī thereby overcomes the sense of separation which the categories give rise to. In this process of internal burning of categories the yogī discovers that the world is equivalent to a vast and horrid cremation ground, which is full of dead bodies and which is the place where they are to be consigned to the funeral fire. This terrible discovery does not give rise in the yogī to the feeling of repulsion or to the sense of dread. The perfect yogī (*siddha*), on the contrary, makes the vow of a hero (*vīra*), with an equipoised mind. As for good and evil are concerned, they are relative or merely conceptual categories, and do not disturb him at all. Upon burning the categories of duality, the yogī discovers that the so-called objective universe, which is marked by the sense of duality, is itself the extension of his own consciousness. While carrying the staff of wisdon (*khaṭvāṅga*) in his hand, the yogī, with the help of this staff, tears to pieces the last shreds of his empirical ego. In the other hand he holds a bowl made of human skull—and the skull is said to be the symbol of the world. It is from this skull from which the yogī drinks the essence (*rasa*) of the universe.[48] In interiorizing these symbols, the yogī thereby is enabled to enter into the deepest recesses of his own consciousness. Abiding in the repose of consciousness, the yogī thus remains oblivious to all that is external to consciousness. In symbolic terms this oblivion is equated to the cremation of the yogī's own body. It is in the blazing funeral pyre of his own cremation in which the yogī burns away all the traces of his past *karman*.[49] Freed from the effects of *karman,* the yogī thereby attains to the state of perfection:

> (The body) is the support of all the gods, the cremation ground frightening with the pyre (of consciousness, *citi,* which destroys all things). Attended by Siddhas and yogīs, it is their awesome (*mahāmudrā*) play ground wherein all embodied forms (*vigraha*) come to an end. Full of countless pyres (of the senses) and pervaded by the halos of their rays, the flux of the darkness (of duality) is destroyed and, free of all thought-constructs, it is the sole abode of bliss. Entering this (body), the cremation ground of emptiness—who does not achieve perfection.[50]

Axiomatically *tāntrikas* assert that the body as well as the senses must be venerated because it is through the sense-organs through which consciousness makes its powers operational. Consciousness reveals its power of illumination through the senses in the same manner as the rays of the sun emit illuminating light. As the centre for the powers of revelation, the senses thereby are personified, in that each sense-organ is considered to be the seat of a particular power, which is personified as a deity. Thus each sense-organ is seen not only a seat of a particular deity, but each of them, in their own way, is seen to be the source of illumination when personified. As the centre of personified powers, the senses have to be venerated and worshipped. It is this attitude of the *tāntrikas* towards the body which makes them to think of the different parts of the body as the centre and source of divine powers. These personified powers in the various parts of the body are invoked through the technique of mystical touch (*nyāsa*). Although the senses are seen to be the centre of divine powers, it is, however, the Heart (*hṛdaya*) which is thought to be the source of the cosmos, the location of supreme consciousness, the source of all the powers. The Heart, as the abode of the universe, is thus the source of everything that exists.[51]

If it is assumed, as do the *tāntrikas,* that the senses are the centre of Divine Energy, then the question may be asked as to why one does not penetrate through them the essence of things? The senses are unable to penetrate the essence of things on account of their physcial nature, and so they remain confined to the surface level of things. When the senses have been purified, and thereby transformed, in the fire of consciousness, they thereby submerge in the divine body of I-consciousness. Accordingly the senses reflect the dazzling brilliance of consciousness, and so are referred to as "the rays of glory of the Self." The limiting factors are removed from the senses the moment they go inward, which means that the senses achieve perfect unity with the divine body of consciousness. It is at this stage of unity where the reversal of roles takes place. No more do the physical senses engage in the activity of cognition; rather it is the senses of the divine body which both preside over and give life to the physical senses.[52] As the physical senses in themselves have no power to illuminate that which is concealed, so it is the Illuminator behind these senses who illuminates that which is to be revealed, and the Illuminator is none other than the I-consciousness.

The senses, in the state of extroversion, always seek relationship with that which is out there. That object alone is perceived by the senses with which relationship is formed. It means that the cognition of the senses is dependent upon that which is to be cognized. However, this dependence of the senses upon the objects is reversed upon their introversion. As and when they are introverted, the senses perceive everything in a mode that is timeless.[53] The senses reach the higher scales of cognition when the limiting factors are removed. The obliteration of obstructions means that the phenomenal character of consciousness is transcended or abandoned. With the removal of obstructions the senses operate in terms of spiritual force. Merged in the Great Light (*mahā-prakāśa*) of Bhairava, the senses attain to the nature of Śiva. It is their divinization which bestows upon the senses the power of cognizing the essence of things. In this manner the senses enable the yogī to reach the higher levels of consciousness. The senses, upon their merger with the divine body of Śiva, acquire the Light of Śiva, and so accordingly illumine everything with this Light. The yogī, thus, has the experience of the senses as the expression of pure energy of consciousness. So the yogī no more perceives the world through the physical senses, but with the senses that have attained the sacred character of the Divine. Thus he looks at the world through the eyes of God. The senses perceive the world as the manifestation of Śiva in the form of sensations. Every sensation, every pulse or heartbeat, reveals that the universe is pervaded by the presence of Śiva.

AESTHETIC PLEASURE OF THE SENSES

As the world is the self-expression (*ābhāsa*) of Śiva, so it has to be looked at both as real and sacred. It is the inherent nature of Śiva to manifest himself objectively. It is by manifesting himself objectively that Śiva not only expresses his absolute power of freedom (*svātantrya-śakti*), but delights as an experient in the pulsating activity of the senses. Analogously speaking, the joy of an individual being is not different from the joy of Śiva, as the former is the objective or atomized expression of the latter. Śiva, through individual beings, takes delight in the garden of his universe through the five flowers or senses of smell, touch, taste, sight and sound.[54] The thrust of the argument is this: It is basically the cosmic consciousness which, through the senses, enjoys the bliss of the world, of the body. This awareness concerning the aesthetic delight of the senses enables a yogī to recognize the fact that he is but Śiva, although in an atomized form, himself. From this awareness is concluded that one's own joy is in no manner different from the joy of Śiva, and on account of this Energy the senses are activated and made operational.[55] The sensations that are given rise to by the senses are seen by the yogī as the rays that emanate from the Great Light (*mahā-prakāśa*). It is this view concerning the body which empowers a *tāntrika* to look at the body not as a hindrance, but as a means of not only knowing Śiva, but participating also in the festival of Divine Delight. As the senses activate initially the movement towards that which is joyful, so they are seen as the best means of arriving at the transcendental bliss that ensues upon attaining to the state of liberation.[56]

The regard which the *tāntrikas* have for the senses allows them to think of the sensual pleasures as a legitimate activity of the body. The pleasures of the flesh are seen as a foretaste for the bliss which comes to be upon the attainment of salvific enlightenment. The yogī, thus, is asked to heighten the range of consciousness by tasting the essence of the sense objects.[57] Accordingly the experience of pleasure is looked at by the yogī as a sacred activity of the senses. The yogī, with this disposition, makes no difference between the experience of the pleasures of the flesh and those of consciousness. The pleasure, whether it be physical or spiritual, is always of the nature of bliss. It is the way we make use of our pleasures that determines our goal. If physical pleasures are made use of in a degenerate manner, they can never heighten the ecstasy of consciousness. If they, however, are seen as emanating from the Great Light, then they would be the most appropriate means of arriving at the experience of ultimate bliss of transcendence. For a *tāntrika* all forms of pleasure are basically spiritual in nature, which means that the aesthetic joy is not a property or an object. Pleasure for a *tāntrika* is essentially a "drop from the ocean of Śiva's bliss."[58] As an activity of the senses, aesthetic pleasure signifies the pulsation of the cosmic consciousness of Śiva.

The pleasures of the body, when refined, terminate in an aesthetic experience that is extremely joyful. An aesthetic experience expresses itself in the beauty of an object, and thereby possesses the power of arresting one's attention. Upon the arrest of attention, the experient, as it were, sucks the flavour or essence of the object through the medium of senses. The aesthetic delight always feeds consciousness with the honey of aesthetic wonder (*camatkāra*). All the forms and shapes of that which is beautiful have the flavour which the senses seize through the sensation of taste, smell, touch, etc. It is through the senses that tasting (*rasana*) is enjoyed, and thereby consciousness is both aroused and heightened. The aesthetic experience of delight transforms itself into the bliss of the Absolute when the experient and the object merge into oneness in the stream of contemplative ecstasy. It is what Abhinavagupta has to say concerning the delight of aesthetic experience:

> Once one has overcome distraction, the pleasure one enjoys through the sentiments of love, etc., expressed in poetry or drama, for example, differ from the pleasure derived from sense experience. This is because (one gains access to it) by the removal of such obstacles as the anticipation of possible personal gain. So, once freed from these impediments, the experience (*pratīti*) is one of relishing (*rasana*), tasting (*carvaṇa*) or contentment (*nivṛtti*) and is, in fact, repose in the cognising subjectivity. It is right to describe it in these terms because the Heart, that is, self-awareness (*parāmarśa*) is (in this experience) the predominant factor. Although the *prakāśa* aspect, centered in the subject, is also present, the sensitivity (on the part of the subject) to its aesthetic quality (*sahṛdayatā*) is a result of ignoring (this objective aspect). . . . When one tastes sweet or other juices, contact with the object of sense represents an obstacle (to the blissful experience of purely pleasurable potential). Similarly, in the case of poetry and drama, etc., although there may be no such obstacle, their latent traces continue to be perceived. Even then, however, by removing the partial obstruction that arises in that way (we) gain attentive hearts and that is Supreme Bliss.[59]

It must now be clear that the difference between the sensual pleasure and the aesthetic joy lies in the fact that the former remains confined to the surface of objects, whereas the latter transcends it. The object, at the aesthetic level, is penetrated, and this penetration does not take place through the sequence of time, but by arresting it. It is in the arrest of time that eternity is experienced. This experience of eternity is experienced by the yogī upon the withdrawal of the senses, which means their introversion. It is in the stillness of time in which is revealed the cosmic aspect of consciousness. It is a transaic experience in which the experience is contentless. The only content which the consciousness has is that of existing. Thus the aesthetic experience is an instrument that links the world of phenomena with the Absolute.

Consciousness, in its embodied mode, always suffers from distraction, whereas at the aesthetic level there is no subject-object dichotomy. All the dualities of phenomality are, at the aesthetic level, consumed in the fire of I-consciousness, and so what remains is the simple and pure unity. It is this I-consciousness which is said to be the source of all sensory energies. An aesthetic experience is of the nature in which no hiatus or gap exists between the sensation and the appreciative awareness. Consciousness flowers by entering the heart of the object. The more there is unity between consciousness and the object, the less is the gap between the sensation and the appreciative awareness. Upon the removal of gap between the two, there is the pervasion of unity (*tanmayī-bhāva*) between the senses and the object. It is a unity in which consciousness breaks out from the shell of individual subjectivity. The main feature of this unity is that of introversion (*antaḥpraveśa*), which means that the aesthetic object is experienced in terms of intimacy. The object loses its individuality by getting dissolved in the flow of aesthetic awareness. Similarly the empirical consciousness bursts forth from the confines of individuality, and thereby submerges in the untrammelled delight of its own subjectivity. Freed from the restrictions of indviduality, there takes place a spontaneous expansion of consciousness, which terminates in the unobstructed delight of outpouring (*ucchalanā*) of pulsation (*spandana, vighūrṇana*) as a pure appreciative subjectivity.[60]

The perceiving subject, according to Tantrism, is existentially affected by the senses. Man's dispositions are already determined by the way the senses function. The flux of sensations are considered by the *tāntrikas* as streams of energy. It is this sensation-energy which, as fuel, feeds both the active and passive aspects of consciousness. The sensation-energy makes consciousness strong (*vīrya*) and fecund (*ojas*). Real aesthetic experience is aroused when consciousness is activated by the vital energy. The stimulation of consciousness via feeling results in the refined awareness and bliss that is experienced in the centre of the Heart. The arousal of consciousness denotes the unfoldment of awareness (*śākta-*

sphāra). This arousal awakens the sense of wonder in the subject. The subject experiences beauty in a new form. Beauty presents, itself to the subject in terms of a new creation, which is brought forth by the emissive power (*visarga-śakti*) of consciousness. The *tāntrika,* from the ultimate perspective, views this experience as the outpouring of the powers of freedom and bliss of Bhairava. The experient, immersed in the object of experience, turns onto himself whereby he relishes the eternal and pulsing nature of consciousness as a divine aesthetic continuum.

LIFE AS A DIVINE WONDER

It must be by now clear that life in the world for a *tāntrika* is not a burden that needs to be cast off. For him life is a divine wonder (*camatkāra*). It is at the aesthetic level that the beauty and wonder of life is experienced. It amounts to saying that the beauty of life will be experienced to the extent one remains sensitive to the surroundings around. Life is appreciated as it is in itself when the sensibilities are refined. One of the features of the aesthetic experience is its mindfulness. It is through mindfulness that we come closer to the wonder of vitality of consciousness. Initially the yogī experiences the sense of wonder by penetrating the object and, as he progresses, he discovers it within. Once the wonder is experienced, the yogī thereonwards is never distracted either by pain or by elation. He remains fixed in the state of sameness.

As the yogī progresses towards introversion, he discovers that consciousness within him pulsates with the throb of expansion. He discovers that life is a sport which the genius (*pratibhā*) of consciousness enacts in the forms of emittive manifestation. The events of life, as well as reactions to them, are seen as a display of consciousness. The aesthetic joy is viewed both as a fruit as well as the cause of a new life. There is an inflow and outflow of the divine tastes (*rasana*) in terms of which joy is experienced both internally and externally. This new discovery gives rise to a new disposition within the adept. It is a disposition which enables the adept to see himself both as a worshipper and the worshipped. It is an attitude which empowers the adept to plunge into the delight of cosmic plenitude. The sweet delight of the aesthetic experience transforms the adept's life into sweetness itself.

Upon reaching the state where the yogī delights in everything, he comes to realize that it is Śiva himself who basiclly delights in his own delight. The vision of the yogī widens so much that he sees it is Śiva who is the seer who sees the poet who writes the plot as well as the Self who plays various roles on the stage of the mind.[61] The three movements of the plot (that is, the beginning, the middle and the end) correspond to the three movements of Śiva: creation, preservation and withdrawal. A perfect yogī experiences all the three movements within his own cosciousness. As he finds the entire creation within, he delights in all the things which he encounters through the senses. The delight of the yogī is not transitory because he remains aware of it in and through all the states of consciousness. The absolute delight of Śiva runs through the veins of the yogī like a running stream, which is constant and unbroken in its flow. The yogī recognizes that the things of the world are the sacred manifestation of the absolute I-consciousness.[62] Seeing everything as the extension of Śiva, he derives joy from every object, and thereby remains in the state of inebriation. When intoxicated by the divine delight, the yogī proclaims:

> Drunk am I by drinking the wine of the Elixir of Immortality (*rasāyana*), which is your worship, perpetually flowing through the channels of the senses from the goblets, full (to overflowing), of all existing things.[63]

The senses express the freedom (*svātantrya*) and awareness (*bodha*) of consciousness when there is an expansion of it. The limitations of the senses become, however, evident when there is contraction of consciousness (*saṁkoca-citta*). When consciousness is in the state of expansion, the senses cognize objects not by contrasting one object against the other, but by unifying them into a whole. The outer objectivity of the world no more places restriction upon the senses. The senses transcend objectivity by attaining to the state of divine sacrality. What it means is this: The sensory powers are no more dependent upon their physical apparatus. They derive their power and vitality from consciousness itself. As the divine forces (or the deities) are said to reside in the senses, they thereby spiritualize the senses by submerging them into the ocean of consciousness. Insofar as the outer frame of the senses is concerned, it serves as the medium for Śiva's omniscience and omnipotence. The senses in their transformed state are no more the physical parts of the body.

The senses, in their act of perception, go through three phases or movements. First of all, there is the movement from the senses to the object. The object faces the senses when the subject intends (*unmukha*) to have a perception of it. In the second phase there is the consolidation of the relationship which the senses establish with the object. The moment the object is cognized, that very moment the subject is affected by the perceived object. There comes a state in which the object of perception abides in the awareness of the senses (*pṛhitārthaviśrāntyāvasthā*). In the final act the object, upon its cognition, is completely abandoned. Insofar as the sensory activity is concerned, it merges in the undifferentiated awareness of consciousness. With this merger the entire operation comes to an end.[64]

The yogī who, according to Tantrism, has transcended the given, recognizes that it are the inner senses of consciousness who, through the outer frame, cognize the object. He also knows that the outer senses, upon their merger with the inner ones, are one with consciousness. The three phases of perception correspond to the three movements of Śiva, which are creation, preservation and dissolution. Thus opines Kṣemarāja:

> Even when the Supreme Lord resides in the body, He affects the creation and dissolution of the fivefold universe of form (taste, touch, smell and sight) by the expansion (*unmīlana*) and contraction (*nimīlana*) of the senses.[65]

The senses, as the main channels of conscious energy, revolve round what the *tāntrikas* call the circle of consciousness. The senses become mediums both for variety and unity. The unity and multiplicity is expressed in the same manner as is found in the feathers of a peacock. When the peacock dances ecstatically, there is the expansion of his feathers, and thereby the beauty of variety is made to shine forth. At the end of the dance, however, the feathers contract or are folded, and thereby variety is dissolved into unity.[66] In making use of this analogy the *tāntrikas* thereby want to explain that there is both diversity and unity of consciousness during the states of expansion and contraction respectively. When the senses move towards the object, there is a creative outflow of conscious energy from the subject to the object, and it is the subject who is the locus of the senses. The subject has the experience of various sensations as well as of thoughts upon the arousal of the senses. Thus declares the *Spandakārikā:*

> Indeed the individual soul does not activate the impulse of the will (which directs the body activity) by himself alone but through his contact with (his) own (inner) strength (*bala*) made in such a way that he identifies with it (thus acquiring its power).[67]

Deriving vitality from consciousness, the senses thereby participate in the very source of existence. The entire activity of the senses, according to Tantrism, is the outpouring of the Self (*svātmocchalatā*) within itself. It is through the senses through which the power of consciousness is initiated. The absolute power of consciousness is apprehended by the yogī when he grasps at the initial movement of expansion (*unmeṣa*).

The totality of expansion, however, can never be grasped by the senses or by the intellect. So the yogī is asked to transcend the realms of senses and of thoughts. It is through the process of introversion of consciousness that the sphere of the senses and of the intellect is transcended. Introversion of consciousness is affected the moment a yogī checks the movement of his attention. Towards this end he has to make internal exertion, and on account of this exertion liberation is realized. The inner exertion unfolds itself as a wonder,[68] which reflects the radiance (*sphurattā*) of unity. It is a state in which the powers of will, knowledge and action submerge in the supreme bliss of Śiva.

The yogī, upon tasting the joy (*ahlāda*) of the bliss of consciousness, is asked not to seek any more the transitory forms of pleasure. He is asked to abide in the creative awareness of Being. Having transcended the natural mode of existence, he, as it were, belongs to the mode of existence that is supernal and supernatural. The bliss which the yogī experiences reflects the power (*bala*) of his own-being. As a new being, the yogī, according to Tantrism, gains lordship over life itself. Nay, he attains to the state of Godhood. As such he recognizes that his nature is uncreate, which means that he is totally free from objective limitations. Thus remarks the *Spandakārikā:*

> Lassitude ravages the body and this arises from ignorance, but if this is eliminated by an expansion of consciousness, how can (ignorance), deprived of its cause, continue to exist.[69]

Remain they in the grip of ignorance who suffer from doubt. Doubt is the spiritual disease of uncertainty. A doubter is always uncertain, and so he shifts from one pole of opinion to another. Doubt bewitches the intellect, and thereby is given rise to confusion. A mind that is always in the state of confusion can never be able to have the experience of innate bliss (*sahajānanda*).[70]

Doubt exists on account of impurities (*malas*). The impurities, as causal agents, conceal the luminosity of consciousness, as the clouds hide the light of the sun. Since the luminous aspect of consciousness remains veiled, so the indvidual being is unable to know his essential nature. The veils of obscuration can be torn off to the extent impurities are removed. What it means is this: The yogī will realize his essential nature to the measure he overcomes the lassitude (*glāni*) caused by doubt. The first indication of the removal of obscuring forces, and thereby of doubt, is the expansion (*unmeṣa*) of consciousness. Upon the expansion of consciousness, the yogī completely frees himself from the grip of doubt. Freedom from doubt also denotes autonomy from the relative distinctions of good and evil. Now the yogī knows that it is Śiva who abides in all states or forms.[71] In the *Spandakārikā* the matter is put in the following manner:

> An individual who (though) desirous of doing various things but is incapable of doing them due to his innate impurity, (experiences) the Supreme State when disruption (*kṣobha*) of his (ego) ceases. Then (the soul realizes) that his (true) uncreated nature is (universal) agency and perceiving subjectivity and so he knows and does whatever (he) desires.[72]

It is the assumption of Tantrism that an individual is unable to have the experience of his cosmic nature on account of the limiting conditions. It is on account of impurities that the individual has the experience of incompleteness, of lack of freedom, of knowledge and action. The hankering for fullness expresses itself when an individual allows the sense of attachment (*rāga*) to emerge for the object which he lacks, or the absence of which gives him the sense of incompleteness. It is by possessing things and entities that an individual tries to satisfy his urges. Even when one desire is satisfied, there emerge a host of other desires, and in this manner the process goes on. The non-satisfaction of desires results in the agitation of mind, and consequently man realizes that how hopeless and helpless he is. It is this sense of limitation and unfreedom which marks the individualness of the individual. To overcome these limitations, the adept is asked to burn the impurities in the fire of ascetic heat, so that the human lacks are transcended. Upon the removal of impurities the yogī comes to know the vibratory nature of consciousness, which, in other words, means that consciousness is of the nature of energy. The next step that the yogī takes is towards the cosmicization of consciousness. While taking this step towards the cosmicization of consciousness, the yogī remains aware that consciousness operates in the world through its innate dynamism.

The cosmicization of consciousness is accomplished through the process of introversion, and introversion is effectively enhanced by the technique of concentration.[73] While resting in itself, consciousness abides in its own tranquil repose, and thereby the yogī sees that the entire objective existence is reflected in his own mind (*citta*). In this deep state of absorption the yogī, with eyes closed (*nimīlana*), sees the universe as his own projection, and consequently enjoys the peace of ecstasy (*samādhi*). As a result of introversion or withdrawal of consciousness the yogī moves in "the Sky of the Heart of Consciousness."[74] In this state of self-immersion the yogī burns all the dualistic structures which empirical consciousness gives rise to:

> All things deposited in the fire of the belly of one's own consciousness, suddenly (*haṭhataḥ*) abandoning all distinctions, feed it with their own power. When diversity, which divides things, is dissolved away by this violent digestion (*haṭhapāka*), the deities of consciousness devour the universe transformed (by this process) into the nectar of ("I"). Once they are satisfied, they rest at one with the God (*deva*) Bhairava who is the fullness of one's own nature and the Sky of Consciousness which, solitary, rests in the Heart.[75]

INTROVERSION AND EXTROVERSION

Upon having accomplished the task of introverting consciousness, the yogī then sets out on a new task, which is to extrovert consciousness whereby its unfoldment (*unmeṣa*) is experienced. Upon its unfoldment, there prevails complete unity upon consciousness, and no fissure whatsoever is experienced. This unfoldment of consciousness through extroversion is called the Great Expansion. Both the processes of consciousness—that of introversion and of extroversion—ultimately terminate in Bhairava, which means that in both cases there prevails absolute unity of Śiva. This experience of unity of consciousness as being identical with Śiva empowers the yogī of unifying the external diversity with consciousness. When expansion is inward, there is the emission of consciousness upon itself without any division. When the expansion, however, is outward, consciousness manifests itself as the external objective universe. By recognizing consciousness as the transcendental basis of everything, the yogī thereby immanentalizes it in relation to the cosmos. In this manner is achieved or accomplished both the introversion and extroversion of consciousness in terms of ecstasy in which eyes are both shut (*nimīlana*) and open (*unmīlana*). At this stage the senses are enabled to fill the universe with the vibrating power of awareness. The senses perceive the presence of the Lord everywhere and in everything. When both expansion and contraction, introversion and extroversion, of consciousness happens simultaneously, it is termed as the state of *bhairavamudrā*. It is a state in which the yogī

> project(s) the vision and all the other powers (of the senses) simultaneously everywhere onto their respective subjects by the power of awareness, while remaining firmly established in the centre like a pillar of gold. . . .[76]

It is through the senses that the Supreme Consciousness, which is identical with Śiva, manifests itself as the essence of its pure awareness (*svasaṁvittisāra*).[77] This energetic power of awareness of consciousness expresses itself simultaneously at two levels: At microcosmic level it expresses itself in terms of the power of senses and at the macrocosmic level it expresses itself as the sensory awareness, which is an awareness that apprehends cosmic objects. The yogī who engages in the practice of *bhairavamudrā* gains the ability of experiencing both these levels simultaneously. The bliss that is experienced at this level is the result of the union that occurs between that which is outer and that which is inner.[78] Upon reaching this state, the yogī frees himself from both external and internal supports on account of him having sunk deep in the absorption of Śiva, which is his own consciousness. He looks at everything like a spectator or like a man who, while at the top of the mountain, surveys the valley down below.[79] While apprehending that which is objective, he stamps everything with the seal of his subjectivity.[80] So writes Kṣemarāja:

> By penetrating into the Bhairavamudrā, the yogī observes the vast totality of beings rising and dissolving into the Sky (of Consciousness), like a series of reflections appearing and disappearing inside a mirror.[81]

Realizing that he is non-different from Śiva, the yogī thereupon becomes aware that he is the substratum (*adhiṣṭhātṛ*) of everything. What it means is this: Yogī now sees everything as being a part of his own being. Accordingly the yogī penetrates the Supreme Abode (*paramapadam*), which is Śiva's Consciousness.[82]

> (The power of the senses) endowed with the attributes of of the Great Union (between the subject and the object) whose form is the awakening of man's spiritual potential (*kuṇḍalinī*), fill (with consciousness) the outer clatter of diversity (*bhedāḍambra*) born out of its intense power and are then established in the unobscured abode of the void of consciousness to shine (there) eternally. Thus residing beyond Being and Non-Being, the sole protector of the unity which is tranquil and expanding (consciousness), whose glory is all-embracing and form unobscured, is called *bhairavamudrā*.[83]

It is on account of the practice of *bhairavamudrā* that the yogī is empowered to effect union between the universal vibration of I-consciousness and the pulsation of the objectivized "this" consciousness. Through this union is realized complete merger between the subjective and the objective. Thus flows forth, on account of this union, the stream of pure knowledge (*śuddhavidyā*) within the yogī, which terminates in the announcement: *I am all things*. Upon realizing his Śivahood, the yogī as Śiva becomes the Master and Lord of all the transcendental powers, and accordingly has the power to create or destroy anything.[84]

> When (the yogī) is well established, without wavering, solely in the integral egoity of his authentic nature, the *spanda* principle, and is absorbed in contemplation (*samāviṣṭa*), he becomes one with it (*tanmaya*). Then . . . dissolving and creating the universe by means of his introverted and extroverted absorption, he destroys and creates all things out of Śaṁkara (Śiva), his innate nature. (Thus) he assumes the state of the universal experiencer and having absorbed all that is to be experienced from (grossest level)—Earth—to the subtlest—Śiva—he reaches the state of the Supreme Subject by progressively recognizing (his identity with Śiva).[85]

Whether the yogī is in the introverted or extroverted absorption, he remains always aware of the pulsating nature of his own consciousness. He achieves the awareness of the highest state of Śiva (*śāmbhavāvasthā*) by resolving the inner into the outer and outer into the inner. The moment he realizes the pulsating nature of consciousness *in toto,* that very moment he gains perfect enlightenment.[86] A yogī who has achieved this perfect state is free from all religious discipline. He does whatever he likes to do while delighting in the power of bliss (*ąnanda-śakti*). He gains complete control over the two movements of extroversion and introversion. The yogī through introversion turns the senses inward—and this process is called the introverted contemplation (*nimīlana-samādhi*). Upon extroverting consciousness, there occurs Great Expansion (*mahā-vikāsa*), and is accordingly termed as the extroverted contemplation (*unmīlana-samādhi*). It is through the practice of *kramamudrā* that the yogī is enabled to gain mastery over the movements of extroversion and introversion. Concerning the technique of *kramamudrā,* or the Graduated Posture, the following is said:

> Although the adept's attention (may be) outwardly directed, he enjoys contemplative absorption through the introverted aspect of *kramamudrā.* Initially he turns inward from the outside world and (then) from within (himself) he exits into the outer world under the influence of his absorption. Thus the sequence (*krama*) in this attitude (*mudrā*) (ranges through) both inner and outer.[87]

The yogī gains real perfection when he, with ease, pervades the surface of things with the same awareness (*vyutthāna*) with which he experiences Reality at its depth. The yogī recognizes that it is the same awareness which pervades both the inner and the outer aspects of Reality when he easily emerges from, and merges into, contemplation:

> The best of yogī who has achieved a state of complete absorption even when risen from meditation, (inwardly) vibrating like a drunkard in blissful inebriation from the after-effects of the nectar of contemplation, sees all things dissolving in the Sky of Consciousness like a cloud in the autumn sky. He plunges repeatedly within himself and becomes aware of his identity with consciousness by the practice of introverted contemplation. Thus even when he is said to have risen from absorption, he is one with the experience of it.[88]

The *kramamudrā,* according to Kṣemarāja, is so named because it pours bliss (*mud*) into the yogī as well as is itself the actual expression of the bliss of consciousness. Apart from destroying (*dra*) the vestiges of bondage, it stamps the universe of experience with the seal (*mudrā*) of enlightened consciousness. The discipline is called *krama* because the conscious processes both emanate and succeed one another sequentially (*krama*). It is on account of the practice of *kramamudrā* that a fusion occurs between the opposites. Upon the merger or fusion of the opposites the yogī comes to know that the lower states are always pervaded by the higher ones, and vice versa. Beginning with the *bhairavamudrā,* the yogī unites the outer with the inner and then, through the technique of *kramamudrā,* pervades the outer with the inner presence, and vice versa. The yogī attains to the highest spiritual state of Śiva when he simultaneously engages in the extroverted and introverted absorption. It is called the state of Bhairava on account of the merger of extroverted and introverted absorptions into each other. This absorptive merger of the two movements of contemplation results in the experience of the Beyond (*anuttara*).[89] The Beyond, as the highest and the supreme spiritual state, is completely free from all forms of distinctions and dichotomies. All the activities of the yogī of this state are spontaneous. The state is so supreme that the resultant experience is of the nature of wonder (*camatkāra*) and of amazement (*vismaya*).[90] As the state of ultimate unity (*yogabhūmikā*), it signifies the merger of opposites in the Great Light of Consciousness.

It must be clear by now from what we have said so far that Tantrism does not differentiate between the sacred and the profane, between the temporal and the eternal, between God and the world, because it sees everything as the extension or expansion of supreme I-consciousness, which in theological terms is called Paramaśiva. It is on account of the lack of spiritual knowledge that differentiation as opposites are experienced at the empirical level of existence. As the world is itself the reflection of the Divine, so it can legitimately be used as a means for arriving at the transcendent experience of the Divine. It is within this perspective that Tantrism gives as much value to sexuality and to aesthetic experience as it bestows upon the yogic techniques of withdrawal. The human body, as the container of the divine power, is seen, microcosmically speaking, as an *ikon* of the Divine. To realize the full potentiality of the body, it is treated as the holy temple of the Lord. It is on the basis of this thinking that the body, as the microcosm, has beeen identified with the macrocosm or what is called the Universal Consciousness. This form of thinking has emerged upon the assumption that the world is seen as having flashed forth from the Absolute through its Energy (*śakti*). It means that the world and the entities therein, including the human body, are but vibrating with the glorious power of Śiva. Tantrism, thus, sees every phenomenal entity as being the sacred *ikon* of the Absolute. A *tāntrika* yogī, therefore, is asked to realize the state of identity so that it may fully be recognized that the phenomenal or temporal is essentially non-different from the Eternal. Upon realizing complete unity between the temporal and atemporal, between the finite and the infinite, a yogī proclaims:

> I make the universe manifest within myself in the Sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator!'—This awareness is the way in which one becomes Bhairava. 'All of manifest creation (*ṣaḍadhvan*) is reflected within me, I cause it to persist'—this awarencess is the way in which one becomes the universe. 'The universe dissolves within me. I who am the flame of the (one) great and eternal fire of consciousness'—seeing thus one achieves peace.[91]

Upon attaining to the state of identity, the yogī thereby is freed from all the shackles which his phenomenality entails. It is accordingly called the sate of liberation because the yogī gains "Mastery over the Wheel of Energies" (*cakreśvaratvasiddhi*). The yogī now governs, as does Śiva, over the powers of creation and dissolution. While one with Śiva, a yogī thereby transcends all that that was characterized by bondage. Now he looks at everything as the sacred manifestation of Śiva. He is no more under the spell of phenomenal categories:

> Just as a man who has been ill for a long time forgets his past pain completely when he regains his health, absorbed as he is in the ease of his present condition, so too those who are grounded in pure awareness, free of thought-constructs, are no more conscious of their previous (fettered) state. Consciousness, the truly existent reality, free of thought-constructs is made fully and evidently manifest by eliminating these differentiated perceptions. The wise man should therefore exert himself to attend closely to (this state

of awareness).[92]

The process of manifestation of the universe begins the moment the Wheel of Energies of Śiva start to revolve. For the yogī, however, both the movements of manifestation and dissolution just are a sport of the Lord, whereas the ignorant thinks of it in terms of rebirth and redeath:

> Happy is the child who sucks at his mother's breast; it is the same breast it fed from in a former life. The husband takes the pleasure in his wife's belly; he was conceived there in the past.
>
> He who was the father is today the son and that son, when tomorrow comes, will be father in his turn.
>
> Such is the flow of *saṁsāra*: men are like buckets round a waterwheel.[93]

The objective world is profane to them who look at it as the concrete expression of the wheel of becoming (*saṁsāra*)—a place which is seized by the ceaseless activity of emergence and of disappearance. The world, as also the human body, will be seen as a burden unless it is recognized that which is objective abides in the Light of Consciousness. Upon looking at the world as a play of consciousness, it ceases to be *saṁsāra*. Ultimately is realized that the objective world

> is Śiva Himself, of unimpeded will and pellucid consciousness, Who is even now sparkling in my Heart. It is His Highest Śakti Herself Who is ever playing at the edge of my senses. The entire world glows at one with that bliss (of I-consciousness). Indeed, I know not what the word *saṁsāra* refers to.[94]

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6. Ibid., 2:78; *TĀV*, 3.123.
7. *TĀV*, 5.80.
8. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 5.109.
9. Ibid., 5.105-6.
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56. *MM*, p. 14.
57. *VB*, 5.74.
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61. *Ś.Sū.*, 3.9; *Ś.Dṛ.*, 1.37; *MM*, 5.19.
62. *TĀV*, 3.229.
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CHAPTER 4

The Trika Theory of Knowledge

Prior to discussing as to what is the Trika theory of knowledge, it is essential to discuss the background of the context that has largely been responsible in determining the philosophical text of the Trika. What it means is this: We will have to take into consideration such schools of thought which, prior to the emergence of Trika, had developed their respective theories of knowledge. It is the context of the various theories of knowledge which has determined the text of the Trika theory of knowledge. Thus the text of the Trika theory of knowledge will have to be evaluated in relation to the theories of knowledge of its opponents.

THE NON-TRIKA THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The earliest theory concerning knowledge is that of the Sāṁkhya school. The Sāṁkhya believes that the intellect functions like a mirror. As reflection is reflected in a mirror, likewise the reflection of an external object is reflected in the intellect (*buddhi*), and accordingly is seen as the source of knowledge. This knowledge, however, is determined by the attributes (*guṇas*) of Nature, which are good *(sattva)*, passionate (*rajas*), and inertial (*tamas*). The intellect, as the product of Nature, is always under the influence of one of the attributes. So the content or nature of knowledge will be determined by the attribute which will be a dominant one. It is on account of the influence of the *guṇa* which empowers the intellect to receive reflection from all sides. Even in the state of bondage (*bandha*), which largely remains under the influence of *tamas,* the intellect still has the capacity to receive reflection partially from the external object.

At this juncture a question arises: How is it possible for the intellect to receive reflection from the external object even in the state of bondage? Is not the state of bondage under the influence of *tamas*? which denotes the state of utter darkness or unknowability. Even though in bondage and under the influence of *tamas,* the intellect, according to the Sāṁkhya, receives an impetus from *rajas,* and thereby frees it, if not completely, at least partially, from the impact of the inertial activity of *tamas.* This partial freedom from *tamas* enables the intellect of having knowledge of the external object, which otherwise would have remained concealed on account of the activity of *tamas.* Mere removal of the obscuring veils, however, will not enable the intellect to have the knowledge of the object.

The object reveals itself, and thereby becomes the object of cognition, when light is thrown upon it. Likewise the intellect, upon the removal of obscruing veils, receives the light from the self-luminous Self (*puruṣa*), which, upon coming in contact through the senses with the object, is thrown upon the object, and thereby the object is made to reveal itself as the object of cognition. Upon receiving light, the object thereby reveals itself by throwing its reflection upon the intellect. It is the reflection of the object upon the intellect which transforms itself into knowledge. The object, which is insentient (*jaḍa*), has no power or capacity of manifesting itself in terms of which it could be cognized. It is the light of the self which, as it were, empowers the insentient object to reveal itself as a knowable. For the Sāṁkhya, thus, knowledge may be equated with the reflection in a mirror. This understanding of knowledge would mean that we know the object as it reveals or manifests itself to the intellect. It is the reflection of the object which the intellect transforms into knowledge. Or should we say that the intellect assumes the form of knowledge when the reflection of the object is reflected upon it. How can mere reflection, it may be asked, transform itself into the act of knowledge? The response of the Sāṁkhya to the question would be this: As the intellect is said to be the meeting-place of the light of the self as well as of the reflection of the object, so it is accordingly said to have the power of assuming the form of knowledge.[1]

As the Sāṁkhya ontology is dualistic, so is its epistemology. There are, according to the Sāṁkhya, two opposite, or, should we say, antithetical, principles involved in the operation of knowledge. On the one hand, we have the limited self or subject (*puruṣa*), which is sentient and of non-material nature, and on the other hand, we have the insentient object, which is of material nature, and therefore belongs to the category of Nature (*prakṛti*). The former principle is said to be indivisible, changeless and self-luminous, whereas the latter one suffers from division, change and, on account of insentiency (*jaḍatvā*), lacks the self-luminosity of the former. One of the fundamental questions that comes to the fore at this point of time is this: How is it possible for the self, which is luminous and indivisible, to relate to that which is insentient and suffers from change and division? Unless the former relates itself to the latter, there is no possibility for knowledge to emerge. Even though relationship between the subject and the object is a necessary pre-requisite for the realization of knowledge, yet it is logically impossible to relate one to the other on account of their differing or dis-similar natures. It is a paradox which the Sāṁkhya has not been able to solve proficiently.

Related to the above question is an another one, which is as mysterious as is the barren woman's son. It is an *a priori* assumption of the Sāṁkhya that the nature of the self is luminosity, and it is on account of this inherent luminosity due to which the object reveals itself as the object of cognition by throwing its reflection upon the intellect. The question that arises is this: Why do we perceive the objects in succession, that is, in time sequence, as well as by contrasting one object from the other when it is assumed that the self inherently is self-luminous? If, on the other hand, a contrary view is upheld in terms of which luminosity is imputed onto the object itself, then the occurrence of knowledge would be an impossible task. Why? Because there would be no one to cognize the object, as the subject would no more be in the possession of light. The possibility for knowledge to emerge exists only on account of the fact that the self, even in its limited mode of existence, has an inherent nature of self-luminosity. Were the subject to be destitute of this self-shining light, then there would be no one to apprehend the object. Since knowledge is not a mere distant possibility, but actually occurs, so it means that the self *a priori* must be assumed to be having the light of its own, and on account of this light the insentient object is cognized. It would completely be erroneous to ascribe the self-revealing light to the object due to the fact that if such a light is imputed onto it, then the object would always and at all times be known. But we have never experienced such a happening. The object is cognized when the sense-organs come in touch with the object, and thereby the image of the object is reflected upon the *buddhi,* which accordingly is transformed into knowledge. The object remains unknown prior to the coming in touch with it. So it proves that it is the self, and not the insentient object, which is luminous. These are some of the difficulties which the Sāṁkhya theory of knowledge gives rise to.

For the Sāṁkhya knowledge is the product of the intellect (*buddhivṛtti*), which itself is the product of Nature (*prakṛti*). All the products of Nature must neccessarily be insentient. If so, then it is contradictory to maintain that the intellect serves as a mirror for the reflection of the object. Further, the Sāṁkhya is unable to explain as to how the intellect transforms the reflection of the object into knowledge. The other difficulty which the Sāṁkhya theory of knowledge gives rise to is with regard to its postulation of two opposites as being the source of knowledge. It is not possible for two opposites, the conscious self and the insentient object, to relate to each other, as common sense tells that in the presence of the one the other gets negated. Take the case of light and darkness. In the presence of light, there is no possibility for darkness to exist. It is in the absence of light that darkness emerges. So to say, as do the Sāṁkhya, that the emergence of knowledge is actualized the moment two opposites relate to each other is a logical hara-kiri.

If the possibility of knowledge, in the light of Sāṁkhya thinking, has to be made actual, then the self as well as the object must share a common nature, which they, however, do not. Since the self and the object are of dis-similar natures, so the Sāṁkhya view of knowledge does not stand even the commonsense test. Even if the Sāṁkhya assertion concerning the reflection of the self as being reflected upon the intellect is accepted, then the question that crops up is this: Does the intellect, upon receiving the light from the self, become light itself? If it is accepted, for the sake of an argument, that the intellect, upon receiving light from the self, attains to luminosity, then it has no capacity of revealing the object the way a material light has, which means that there will never occur the actual perception of the object. Also the assumption concerning the self as being luminous loses its meaning if it is accepted that the intellect, upon receiving light from the self, has become as self-shining as is the self.

Next to the Sāṁkhya come Buddhists. The various Buddhist schools have their own theories of knowledge. Broadly speaking, Buddhist theories of knowledge are either realistic or idealistic. The Hīnayāna schools, particularly the Sarvāstivādins and the Sautrāntikas, are by and large followers of philosophic realism, whereas the two main Mahāyāna schools, the Mādhyamikas and the Vijñānavādins, have an aversion towards realism, and so are largely idealistic in orientation. The Buddhist schools that had an impact upon the Trika epistemology are the Sautrāntikas and the Vijñānavādins.

The Sautrāntikas, while adhering to the Hīnayāna orthodoxy, did not adhere *in toto* to the realism that the Sarvāstivādins had formulated. The Sautrāntikas rejected the realistic notion that an external object is directly apprehended. According to them, the external object, on account of its momentary existence, is apprehended indirectly. Why? Because an object that is momentary can never be reached during the moment of its perception. The object ceases to be the moment perception takes place. If the object is momentary, and ceases to exist the moment perception occurs, then what is it, in the absence of the actual object, that is perceived. The Sautrāntikas would say that it is the object of the past which is being perceived rather than the object that has emerged. The object that has ceased leaves its impression upon the mind as well as upon the emergent object. It is this impression or idea (*akāra*) which is seen as a link between the object that has ceased and the object that has emerged. In this way the series continues *ad infinitum.* It is from the impression that the prior existence of the corresponding member or emergent entity in the series is inferred. This means that which is cognized exists actually, but the perception of the cognized does not take place at the time of its actual existence. This epistemology of the Sautrāntikas has been termed as the theory of representative idealism.[2]

The Sautrāntikas, while giving birth to representative idealism, paved thereby the way for the emergence of subjective idealism, which would duly be adopted by the Vijñānavādins or what is called the Yogācāra school. It are the three inter-linked ideas which are responsible in giving birth to the implicit idealism of the Sautrāntikas. These inter-linked ideas may be summarized thus:

1. Every phenomenal category, whether physical or mental, is transient.
2. That which is transient has to be insubstantial.
3. The transiency of the object denotes its momentariness. And that which is momentary cannot be a whole, that is, substantial. It has to be a unique particular.

Why do the Buddhists, on the whole, think of the phenomenon as being identical with transiency? For the Buddhist the empirical experience tells us that nothing in the world is stable or permanent. Basing himself upon the collective experience of mankind, the Buddhist points out that the phenomenal entities are transient on account of them being characterized by birth, duration and destruction, which means that an entity which is subject to past, present and future cannot be eternal (*nitya*). That entity is subject to temporal succession which is oriented towards destruction, or whose nature it is to be destroyed. It amounts to saying that the phenomenal entitites are prone to non-existence.

In accepting the mental and non-mental as being momentary, Sautrāntikas thereby tell us that the so-called luminous self is no exception to the law of universal momentariness. The self is as momentary as are the insentient entities out there. Even though the object or a mental phenomenon may be instantaneous, it, upon its destruction, gives rise to a similar object or mental event. The similarity between the entity that has been destroyed and the one that has emerged is dependent upon the impressions (*saṁskāra*) which the object, before its passing away, leaves upon the mind as well as upon the emergent object. In this way the series goes on. The emergent object is similar, and not identical with, the object that is no more. In relation to knowledge it means that the knowledge of the preceding object becomes the basis for the knowledge of the emergent object, which is similar to the knowledge of the object that is no more. Further this theory of momentariness tells us that the reflection or image of the object is as momentary as is the object itself.

This doctrine of momentariness has given rise to a host of difficulties, which seem to be as intractable for solution as are paradoxes. As already pointed out above, the emergence of knowledge is possible provided the subject is able to relate itself to the object which it wants to cognize. There is no possibility for knowledge to be produced unless the subject and the object are enabled to relate to each other. If both the subject and the object have an instantaneous existence, then there is no possibility for them to relate to each other, which means that there is complete absence of knowledge. The moment the subject endeavours to relate itself to the object, that very moment both of them have receded into the oblivion of non-existence. So it is difficult to see as to how the subject and the object can remain in direct touch with each other when both of them are no more existing. The conception the Sautrāntikas have of consciousness makes it quite difficult to explain the emergence of knowledge. For them consciousness is like a seamless stream, even though it is as momentary as any other phenomenal object. As a seamless stream, consciousness is free from diversity. Also consciousness is said to be of the nature of light. The Sautrāntikas seem to be agreeing with the Sāṁkhya when they postulate two dis-similar opposites as a prerequisite for the realization of knowledge. We face the same logical difficulties in postulating opposites as a precondition for the operation of knowledge which we do in the case of the Sāṁkhya. Where the Sautrāntikas go astray is in explaining the diversity in knowledge. If consciousness is assumed to be pure light, free from diversity, and is as seamless as is water in a stream, then the question arises: How to explain the diverse or multiple forms of knowledge? There is lack of cohesion in knowledge, assert the Sautrāntikas, on account of the influence the diverse objects exert upon the limited consciousness. This answer can be countered by saying that momentary objects outside consciousness are in no position to have influence upon consciousness because they are already extinct, on account of their momentary existence, by the time perception may reach them. As the momentary objects are never perceived directly, so to say that they influence consciousness is logically an unsound assertion.[3]

The Sautrāntika theory of knowledge tells us that we never have the direct perception of an object on account of its momentary existence. The object, thus, is perceived indirectly. It means that we can never have determinate knowledge of anything that we may congnize. Why? Because determinate knowledge is actualized when the object is directly apprehended, or should we say that it is the direct presence of the object which gives rise to determinate knowledge. The Sautrāntika would counter this by saying that inference results in determinate knowledge without the actual presence of the object. But this is not true—would be the reaction of the opponent. We cannot infer the existence of fire from smoke unless we have directly perceived this to be the case. When the cognition of fire and smoke is repeated again and again, we then give a judgment which is universal in nature, and which says: Where there is smoke, there is fire; or where there is fire, there is smoke. Even inference (*anumāna*), thus, has its basis in direct perception.

The Sautrāntika Buddhists would counter the above argument of their opponents by saying that there is no need of direct perception in the case of generic inference (*sāmānyatodṛṣṭa*). It is from the previously known general law from which inference is made concerning the non-perceptible object. The example they give is of the Naiyāyikas concerning the existence of soul. The Naiyāyikas infer the existence of the soul from the general law which tells that qualities always inhere in a substratum. The very existence of the intellect or the senses informs that there must exist such a substance which would serve as the substratum (*āśraya*) of both the intellect and the senses. It is the logical necessity of the soul as the substratum of qualities which led the Naiyāyikas to postulate its existence. The soul as an object of perception is never perceived directly. Likewise we never perceive senses directly. We infer their existence from the fact of perception itself. Whether it be the existence of the soul or of the senses, it is based upon the general law or assumption which tells us that every event must have a necessary cause. So the criticism of the opponents is not valid concerning the direct perception as the basis of inference.

These counter arguments of the Sautrāntika Buddhists do not seem to have convinced the Trikites. They point out that it is not true to say that the object has not directly been perceived in the case of generic inference. The generic inference is always deduced from direct perception. Take the case, for example, of the senses. The existence of the senses is not inferred as having a definite nature. They are inferred as existing necessarily as causes for the occurrence of perception. Insofar as causes are concerned, we experience them daily in our day-to-day existence. We see, for instance, how threads are transformed or changed into a piece of cloth, or how the seeds change into young and tender sprouts.[4] So the Sautrāntika theory concerning indirect perception as the source of knowledge falls flat on account of its logical untenability.

The other major Buddhist school which had an impact upon the Trika Śaivism of Kashmir is the school of Vijñānavādins or Sensationalists. The Vijñānavādins made good use of some of the seminal ideas which the Sautrāntikas had formulated. The Sautrāntikas had asserted that our cognition of the external world is of representational character. In this manner they gave due importance to the subjective factors of our experience. While accepting this view of the Sautrāntikas, the Vijñānavādins, however, thought of this attempt as being half-hearted. For the Vijñānavādins to be critical means the abandonment of realism in its entirety.

For the Vijñānavādins the external is unreal on account of it being the projection of mind. The phenomenal may be unreal, but the source of the unreal is real. For the idealists it makes no sense to speak of a groundless unreal phenomena.[5] The ground of the unreal cannot be objective, as the objective is seen as the chimera of imagination. What then is real? The real is that which is subjective. While the subjective is real, the projection of subjective is viewed as illusory or unreal.

The subective as real means that consciousness alone is real. Whatever appears in consciousness is seen to be only one of its forms. What appears to be distinct from consciousness has no existence apart from it. What appears in consciousness is nothing but its own projection. In order to grasp the Vijñānavādin conception of mind-only, we will have to take into consideration its analysis of perception.

It is perception which is seen as the main source of knowledge. The other means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), being dependent upon perception, play a secondary role in the realization of knowledge. This understanding ultimately leads to the conclusion that no beginning can be made with regard to knowledge apart from perception. It will not be possible, thus, to explain the ontological content of reality unless the operation of perceptual knowledge is explained satisfactorily.

Perception, ordinarily speaking, denotes the cognition of an object by the cognizing subject. It is through the subject that an interpretation of an experience is offered. Facts or experience will not result in knowledge unless interpreted. It is the cognizing subject that interprets facts, and thereby knowledge is allowed to emerge. The very interpretation of fact denotes the experience the subject has concerning what has been cognized. From this is concluded that the existence of the subject is self-proved. Knowledge as it is in iteself cannot be transcended on account of its indispensable nature. The object of knowledge, however, does not enjoy the same status as is enjoyed by knowledge.

One of the questions that comes to mind is this: Do we know the object as it is in itself or do we know it as it appears in knowledge? The Sautrāntikas are of the view that the given can be apprehended as it is in itself. It is contended that knowledge is twofold: The given and the conceptual, the indeterminate and the determinate, the general and the specific. Both the forms of knowledge are distinct from each other. It is through the self that the given is apprehended. Were knowledge a construction of the mind, it would not be possible even to know that knowledge can be known only if the two terms are differentiated from each other, which are the determinate and the indeterminate, the general and the specific, etc. Further the Sautrāntikas think that the unique particular alone should be considered as the given. The universal, in contrast to the given, is seen as the construction of the mind (*nāmajātyadiyojana kalpanā*).

As alrealy pointed out, it is on account of perception that a given is cognized.[6] The universal, being the construction of the mind, is apprehended through inference (*anumāna*). It is perception which cognizes the ultimately real elements. The elements, on account of their insubstantiality, are constantly changing not in the sense of passing from one state to another, but in the sense of dying and giving rise to new ones. Thus elements exist momentarily (*kṣaṇika*).

The Vijñānavādins, while adhering to subjective idealism, think of consciousness as the basis of that which is cognized outside of it. The external world has its source in consciousness, or should we say, the world is a projection or construction of the mind, and so mind or consciousness is seen to be the sole reality. This consciousness is as momentary as are the objects which it constructs or projects. Consciousness which is seen as the substratum of whatever there is, is termed as the Storehouse Consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Each individual has its own specific Storehouse Consciousness, which is different from the Storehouse Consciousness of other individuals. This Storehouse Consciousness is seen to be like a container, and it is in this container in which impressions (*vāsanā*), like seeds, are contained. Unless activated, these impressions remain in the state of latency. The latent seeds or impressions, when activated, determine the content of the existence of the individual.

The Storehouse Consciousness, as the residuum of latent impressions, is said to be in possession of such powers which enable it to give rise to sensations (*pravṛttivijñāna*), and on account of these sensations contact with the external world is established, and thereby are experienced diverse experiences which are constitutive of everyday life of an individual. It is *vāsanā,* or impression, which is responsible in activating sensations. The *vāsanā,* however, is as fleeting and momentray as is consciousness itself. Like consciousness, it is autonomous, and thereby has the power of giving rise to certain presentiment, whose content is dependent upon the nature of the *vāsanā* itself. The intensity of the presentiment is determined to what degree the latent impression has achieved maturity (*paripāka*). It is upon the maturity of the latent impression that the result, in the form of a fruit, is experienced, which means that there occurs a cognitive experience. What it amounts to saying is this: The cognitive experience, which an individual has, is nothing else but a mere presentiment—and this cognitive presentiment is determined to what extent the latent impression has become mature.[7]

Further it is well to remember that the Vijñānavādins, being faithful adherents of the Mahāyāna, have classified reality into that which is absolutely real (*paramārtha*) and that which is relatively real (*saṃvṛti*). For the Vijñānavādins it is the momentary chain of consciousness which alone is real (*sat*), and that which appears (*abhāsate*) in and through cosnciousness is termed as being apparent or relatively real. Although that which appears in and through consciousness is unreal, yet that which is its substratum, which is said to be the mind or consciousness, is real. An analogy of rope-snake may here be taken into consideration. The snake which, on account of certain conditions, is superimposed upon the rope, which is the substratum, turns out to be illusory. It is upon the removal of existing conditions that we come to know that the rope alone is real and not the snake. Similar is the case with consciousness and its constructions. That which consciousness constructs is false, but consciousness, as the basis of that which has been constructed, is said to be real.

As to why, it may be asked, do the Vijñānavādins ascribe the nature of reality to that which exists as momentarily as exist constructed entities? The Vijñānavādins would say that consciousness may exist momentarily, yet it exists, and is not at all illusory like the constructed objects. Moreover, it is logically inconsistent to maintain that which is non-existent can be the cause of that which is apparent. It is not the non-existent rope but a real one which is the cause of an illusory snake. Likewise consciousness is to be seen as the cause of the apparent objectivity. It is, therefore, logical to say that the real alone can be the cause of the unreal, and in our case it is consciousness which is the cause of the apparent world.

This reasoning of the Vijñānavādins does not seem to be sound. It is contradictory to say that the real can be the cause of the apparent, as the latter, upon its negation, turns out to be non-existent. So the existent cannot be made the cause of that which is inexistent. The only way left for the Vijñānavādins to free themselves from the web of contradictions is to postulate the proposition that the *vāsanās* exist autonomously. If autonomy is ascribed to *vāsanās,* then the Vijñānavādins would no more remain Sensationalists, and accordingly would no more be better off than those who assert that variation in consciousness comes to be on account of the external influences.[8] Further the assertion of the Vijñānavādins that consciousness as well as sensations of each individual are different make it an impossible task for group of individuals to cooperate with each other in tasks that cannot be performed individually. The Vijñānavādins, thus, are unable to explain the diverse experiences each individual has as well as the collective experiences a group of individuals may have.

The Existence of the Self

Prior to enquiring as to what is the nature or content of knowledge, it is necessary, before anything else, to find out as to whether the occurrence of knowledge is possible in the absence of a self. The Buddhists of all varieties and hues have axiomatically accepted that there is no self. In contrast to the Buddhist theory of not-self, the Trikites of Kashmir have ①
accepted, like the Vedāntins, the existence of the self as being *a priori.* 2

The Buddhist negative attitude ultimately culminated in the doctrine of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which identifies Reality with that which is devoid of any nature. This implicit nihilism of the Buddhists is not acceptable to those who have adhered to the Brāhmanical notion of a permanent self. Morever, the existence of the self is necessitated by the logical or epistemological needs. If the postulation of the self, however, is dependent upon the epistemic or logical needs, then the real existence of the self is suspect, and thereby we may have to agree with the Buddhist doctrine of not-self (*anātmakam*). These are some of the basic questions that have to be tackled even before taking into consideration what knowledge is in itself.

The Trika Śaivites, like the Advaita Vedāntins,[9] accept the existence of the self as being *a priori* by asserting that it (the self) "is present as the doer and the knower at the very beginning of all behaviour."[10] This *a priori* assumption of Trikites concerning the actual existence of the self does not tell us as to whether it exists ontically. It only tells of a self in terms of epistemological functions of an individual. Even when the actual existence of the self is accepted, it means that it has to be seen as an independent and non-material entity (*tattva*), and thereby could be considered as the source of human knowledge or experience.

Upon accepting the *a priori* existence of the self as being actual, the next question that needs to be looked into concern knowledge itself, which is: Is knowledge innate to, or an adventitious attribute of, the self? If knowledge is viewed as an attribute of the self, then there would occur a fissure between the knowing subject and knowledge on account of the fact that the latter would merely be residing in the former, which would be its substratum, and thereby would in no manner be one with it. This ontological schism between the substratum and its attributes is mainly followed by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. In the context of this schism between the knowing subject and knowledge it would have to be accepted that knowledge is not innate to the self. As to why Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school accepts this separation between the subject and knowledge is because it believes that in case we accept knowledge to be innate to the subject, then we will be having knowledge even in deep sleep, which however never happens, and so accordingly knowledge has to be considered only as an attribute of the self.

The Trikites do not, however, accept the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view of knowledge as being a mere attribute of the self. In order to prove that knowledge is the innate nature of the self, the Trikites make use of the analogy of the sun and its light. As the light of the sun may be concealed by the clouds, so the luminous nature of the self remains hidden in the state of sleep. As the clouds are impediments or obstruction in the way of the sun, likewise sleep is a mere obstruction in the way of the self.[11] Upon the removal of the obstructive clouds, the light of the sun functions in accordance with its nature, which is to illumine everything that comes into its ambit. Likewise the luminous nature of the self is made manifest upon the removal of obstructions. From this analogical argument of the sun and its light the Trika thinkers conclude that knowledge and consciousness are not two separate entities, but are identical like fire and heat. If the two are identical, so to differentiate one from the other would be erroneous. As illumination is identical with light, so knowledge is non-different from consciousness or self.

Unlike the Vedāntins, who speak of knowledge as a state of passivity, the Trika Śaivites think of knowledge (*jñāna*) as an activity. To the extent knowing of an object is considered as an act of grasping, to that extent knowledge would denote an activity. The Vedāntins explain the passive nature of knowledge by making the use of the analogy of reflection in a pond. The pond is linked to the mind and reflection in the pond to the image of the object that is presented, through the senses, to the mind. As the pond remains passive when the reflection of the object is reflected into it, likewise the mind remains in the state of passivity when it receives the image of the object. The question however is: Does this analogy at all serve the purpose in explaining the passive nature of knowledge? The analogy has no legitimacy to the extent it is construed that the mind does not actively grasp the reflection that is reflected in it. The mind, while grasping the object of knowledge, has to understand it, which means: It has to be aware of what it has grasped. The knowledge of the object will, thus, be realized to the extent the self, as it were, seizes it. This shows, point out the Trikites, that knowledge is an activity.

In addition to knowledge being an activity, it is also said to be self-luminous (*svayamprakāśa*), which means that knowledge not only reveals the knowables, but also is self-proved and self-luminating. As to how can it be asserted that there is no need to prove the existence of the self is logically proved the moment we accept that doing and knowing presuppose that there has to be a knower and doer who knows and does various kinds of acts. If this presupposition concerning the self as knower and doer is accepted, then equally we will have to agree to the axiom that neither knowledge nor any kind of activity is possible apart from the self. This argument, therefore, leads us to the conclusion that there actually is a self, and so its existence is proved. It is this very self which is said to be identical with consciousness. (It is this very self as consciousness who knows or who engages in various activities. Thus the existence of the self stands self-proved.[12])

The Trikites also maintain that the existence of the self is a logical necessity. The world, in the absence of a self, would plunge into the darkness of unknowability.[13] But the experience of the world tells us that it is a knowable entity, which means that there exists a knowing subject who knows and experiences the world. If there were no self, then the world of objectivity would never be known on account of the absence of a knowing subject. The world has no possibility of knowing itself on account of its insentiency. That which is insentient is destitute not only of self-luminous light, but also of the capacity of reflection (*vimarśa*). It is the power of reflection which transforms that which is revealed into knowledge. Mere manifestation of an object would never terminate into knowledge unless it is reflected upon. It is the knowing subject alone who possesses both the light of revelation as well as the power of reflection. It is, therefore, the knowing subject who has the capacity of transforming into knowing that which otherwise would remain concealed under the covers of darkness. The existence of a self-luminous as well as of reflecting self stands thus self-proved.

It is this understanding of the self which, more or less, seems to be agreeable to most of the schools of Indian thought. The self is seen as the basis of what we are, and it is on account of this self that we are both knowers and doers. The Sāṁkhya attempts to prove the existence of the self by saying that it is the basis (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of all the mental activities of an individual.[14] The Jainas, while criticizing the Buddhists for their rejection of the existence of self, say that in the very act of negations of the self is affirmed its existence. Similar argument is offered by the Vedāntins.[15]

LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE

Insofar as the degrees of knowledge or of reality are concerned, the Trika thinkers have faithfully followed the Mahāyāna as well as Vedānta hierarchical conception of reality and of knowledge. For the Mahāyāna thinkers the ontological status of the world is the same which we accord to dream-objects or to objects that illusion gives rise. Since the world of objectivity is destitute of any degree of reality, so the knowledge that is empirical too must be of the same nature, that is, illusory. That which is transcendent to the phenomenal is alone real. It is this classification of reality as well as of knowledge which the Vedāntins would follow later on. For them *brahman* alone is real, whereas the world of matter is the product of transcendental illusion (*māyā*). It is upon negating the illusory world of objectivity that the Vedāntins establish the unity or oneness of Being (*brahman*). In accordance with this conception of what is real and what is unreal is established the theory of degrees of knowledge, which explains that actual or real knowledge is transcendent (*paramārtha*) to everything that is phenomenal, or that which is subject-object oriented. Insofar as the phenomenal knowledge is concerned, it is illusory and unreal, and therefore untrustworthy. The empirical knowledge, however, has a functional value, as it is on account of this knowledge that the day-to-day affairs of life are conducted. So this knowledge is accordingly termed as being relatively real (*saṁvṛti-satya*). The empirical knowledge has a functional (*vyāvahārika*) value, and nothing more than that.

While agreeing to the Mahāyāna and Vedānta classification of knowledge, the Trikites have accordingly divided knowledge into that which is supernal (*alaukika*) and that which is worldly or empirical (*laukika*). The worldly knowledge is acquired through empirical means, and therefore is limited in scope. It is either abstract, which means conceptual, or is based upon the sense-perception. As the ordinary forms of knowledge are dependent upon the senses or upon intellectual concepts, they are therefore limited. That which is beyond the senses or the intellect can never be known through the ordinary means of knowledge. The knowledge that is supernal has its ground in the experience (*anubhūti*) of what is real, which means that it is a knowledge which is neither perceptual nor conceptual. One of the aspects of this knowledge is that it is free from the subject-object dualism, which is the bane and badge of ordinary knowledge. In ordinary knowledge everything is differentiated, and in terms of this differentiation is established the identity of an entity. Since difference and diversity is the hallmark of ordinary knowledge, it means that the self is seen to be distinct not only from everything that is cognized, but from Śiva itself. It is this differentiation between the subject and object, between the subject and subject, that is transcended upon the attainment of supernal knowledge. That which differentiates the supernal knowledge from the ordinary is the fact that in the former knowledge is apprehended or experienced the unity of Being (Śiva),[16] whereas in the latter form of knowledge there is complete absence of unity.

This formulation of knowledge tells us that the ordinary knowledge is basically dependent upon the senses as well as upon the intellect. It is on account of this contingent nature of ordinary knowledge that it has the capacity only to reveal the epistemological, and not the ontological, self. What it denotes is this: The limited knowledge of the empirical self is unable to tell or inform us as to whether the self is a mere knowing principle or is ontologically of the nature of Śiva. Since intellectual knowledge is limited in scope and content, so there must be a knowledge through which we are empowered to know that which is supersensible, and thereby non-conceptual and non-sensual. It is the supernal or supersensible knowledge which is available in the canonical texts called the Āgamas, and which is experienced upon following the prescribed path that is shown is these texts.

As already pointed out, the nature of the supersensible knowledge, in contrast to the ordinary one, is this: It enables the knowing subject to have the experience of unity of Being, and in terms of which the apparent diversity of ordinary knowledge is transcended. Thus one experiences that the so-called limited self is not limited, but is, in fact, Śiva itself, which means that the so-called empirical self is essentially identical with the Supreme Self (*paramātman*). This knowledge concerning the nature of the self is available in the Āgamic texts alone, and it is on account of this supersensible knowledge that an individual being is enabled to recognize (*pratyabhijñā*) himself as to what he essentially is, which is his non-difference from the Absolute (*anuttara*).

As to what is the basis, it may be asked, upon which the Trikites have constructed this dyadic classification of knowledge. The answer is simple. The epistemic division of knowledge into what is called the functional knowledge and the transcendent one has its source in an ontology whose theoretical roots go back to the Upaniṣadic and the Mahāyānic thinking, which sees the nature of Reality to be unitary, and whatever diversity, at the empirical level, is experienced, has only an epistemic, and not ontological, value. Since diversity is antithetical to unity, so the former has been given that amount of reality which its functionality demands or deserves. It is in the context of what is real and not-real that the Trikites, like their predecessors, classified knowledge as being either transcendent or phenomenal; the former completely being non-conceptual, and the latter conceptual. Since phenomenal knowledge is diverse in nature, so it is always dependent upon the duality of subject-object, and without this duality no form of empirical knowledge has any possibility to emerge. Since dependence is the nature of empirical knowledge, so it means that it is always limited in scope and finite in nature. At this juncture a genuine question concerning the arising of limited nature of empirical knowledge can be asked, which is: If the self is non-different from Śiva, then why does it suffer from the limitation of will, knowledge and action? The answer of the Trikites to this ticklish question is this: The Universal Consciousness, which is identical with Śiva, atomizes itslef willingly by reducing itself to the status of limited being (*paśu*), and so accordingly it is Śiva as a limited being who experiences these above-mentioned limitations. The Universal Consciousness, in the process of manifestation, manifests itself either in the form of that which is sentient (*ajaḍa*) or that which is insentient (*jaḍa*). Both the forms of manisfestation of the Universal Consciousness are finite and limited on account of their embodied mode of existence, which means both the forms are subject to space-time structures.

THE NATURE OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

(Even though the limited self, on account of its phenomenality, may be limited in its scope insofar its functions are concerned, this does not deprive it of its essential nature (*svabhāva*), which means that the self does not suffer from the lack of its ontic ultimacy. The self remains ontically identical with Śiva. Whatever limitations it experiences are either physcial or mental in nature. As a minifest category, the individual self does not act in accordance with its own will. It is, rather, the Universal Consciousness which wills, knows, and acts in and through the limited individual self. The individual, on account of ignorance and impurities, is not aware as to how the Universal Consciousness empowers it to act or to know that which it wants to know. It is on account of various impurities, some inherited and some acquired, and limiting factors (*kañcukas*) that the individual experiences such mental and physical impediments (*bādha*) which are of the nature of finitude.)

(One of the aspects of limited knowledge is that it is of determinate nature (*svavikalpa*). The knowledge that is determinate is dependent upon name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*), which means that there is no possibility of knowledge to occur unless it is named conceptually or has a form. The knowledge that is named or is determined by the form of the object will always be limited in scope. The other aspect of limited knowledge is that it is diverse or multiple. We cannot know a particular object unless it is contrasted with, or compared to, other objects that come within the range of the knowing subject. It is, thus, through the method of exclusion that determinate knowledge is realized. The limitedness of determinate knowledge expresses itself when the knowing subject identifies itself either with the physical body, or with the vital air, or with the intellect. When the knowing subject says that *he is fat,* he thereby identifies the self with the body, which is fat. Similarly when he says: *I am strong,* he thereby identifies the self with the prowess or energy of his body, which is of the nature of vital air. Likewise when he says: *I know this,* he thereby identifies the self with the intellect. The knowledge of the empirical self, thus, is not only limited in scope, but is also erroneous in orientation, which means that it is incomplete (*apūrṇa*).

It is of interest to note that (the erroneous identification of the self with the products of Nature (*prakṛti*) is, according to Trikism, momentary.) The Trikites are one with the Buddhists in saying that all the products of Nature are inherently of momentary nature, and so their association that is established through knowledge with such entities too is of momentary nature. Even though the association between the knowing self and the material entities may be of short duration, yet both of them are ontically identical on account of them being the extension of Śiva. It is Śiva himself who reduces himself to the limited self as well as manifests himself as a material entity. Prior to the emergence of determinate knowledge, there exists a state in which knowledge is indeterminate, and so is unitary in nature, which means that such a knowledge is free from the deficiencies of determinate knowledge. This indeterminate knowledge is, as it were, characterized by pure sensation, and so is accordingly free from form. The knowledge that is formless can neither by named nor conceptualized. As such indeterminate knowledge represents pure unity.[17] What all this amounts to saying is this: Every determinate knowledge is preceded by an indeterminate one, which, with regard to self, means that there occurs every moment a new manifestation of the self.

In the context of recurring manifestation of the limited self it is well to remember that the very sequence of manifestation is equally applicable to that which is insentient.[18] The entity that manifests itself becomes the basis of a single idea, which, through the method of contrast and exclusion, is cognized by means of a single word. Let us take the case of a jar. There are various forms of manifestation of the entity called jar. We have to take into consideration its materiality, size, colour, position, and so on. While perceiving the object jar, there are simultaneously involved various acts of perception, which determine the final cognition of the object. It means that each revelatory perception of the object is dependent upon various perceptions, which jointly determine the content of the cognition of the object. Even our determinate cognition is dependent upon our will and the need we have of the object that is being cognized.[19]

The occurrence of knowledge is linked to the two waves of the sea: one representing the subject, and the other, the object. The subjective wave is said to be of the nature of *nairmalya,* which means that it has the innate power of receiving the reflection of the objective wave that is being reflected upon it. It is upon receiving the reflection that knowledge is allowed to emerge. It is well to remember that such aspects of the objective wave are being reflected upon the subjective which have the possibility of knowability. It is the intellect which is thought to be like a mirror. As reflection is reflected in a mirror, so the reflection of the knowable is reflected upon the intellect. The reflected knowledge, however, is not that of shadows, but is of actual objects.

THE NATURE OF SUPERNAL KNOWLEDGE

It is one thing to say that the supernal knowledge is transcendent to that which is ordinary, but quite different when it comes to the question of affirming it. Since we have only the empirical means of knowledge at our disposal for knowing that which the intellect has the capacity to grasp, so the question that arises is: How can we apprehend or know that which is non-intellectual, and thereby non-conceptual? These are some of the legitimate concerns which one may raise concerning the character of supernal knowledge.

As the levels of knowledge are twofold, so the nature of knowledge is also said to be of two kinds: spiritual knowledge (*pauruṣa-jñāna*) and intellectual knowledge (*bauddha-jñāna*). The former type of knowledge, on account of its nature, is non-conceptual, and so is transcendent to the knowledge that is functional or intellectual (*bauddha-jñāna*). The latter form of knowledge is completely dependent upon the sense-organs, and so is accordingly confined to that which is phenomenal. The knowledge that is phenomenal has only a functional value, and therefore has no power of leading one to the ultimate soteric goal of freedom (*mokṣa*) from bondage. Moreover, intellectual knowledge, in one way or the other, is always under the influence of impurities (*malas*). It is upon the removal of impurities that the intellectual knowledge is transcended, which simultaneously denotes the emergence of supernal knowledge.[20] One of the main characteristic feature of supernal knowledge is that it is non-sensual as well as non-conceptual. This knowledge may be linked to the indeterminate one which arises prior to the actualization of determinate knowledge. Free from mental concepts and images, this knowledge, thus, is non-verbal, which means it is inexpressible and unthinkable.

An objection can be raised concerning the supernal knowledge as being non-verbal or non-conceptual. How is it possible to speak of knowledge apart from concepts or images? Whatever we know, we know it either in the form of mental images, concepts or signs. Nothing can be communicated or thought of apart from images or concepts. It is a traversy of truth, so the opponents can say, to maintain that the supernal knowledge is totally free from concepts or images. To counter this crticism the Trikites would say that the supernal knowledge is never arrived at through the physical or mental aids. As it is spiritual in nature, so it can be accomplished only through such means which are spiritual in nature, which means that only such persons have the possibility of attaining it who have been initiated by a competent guru[21] in the esoteric practices and doctrines of Trika Śaivism. It is this enfleshment of supernal knowledge with the flesh of esoterism which is out of the purview of ordinary knowledge, and so ordinary means or methods of criticism do not seem to be applicable to the knowledge that is supernal. It is upon the attainment of supernal knowledge that the individual immediately recognizes (*pratyabhijñā*) that the essential nature of the self, which in its empirical mode is seen as discrete and limited, is basically of the nature of Śiva. Further it is also known that the world (*loka*), of which we are a constitutive part, is nothing but the manifestation of the Cosmic Self.[22]

The technical terms which the Trika uses concerning the supernal knowledge are such which, on account of their orientation towards interiority, tell us that this knowledge is more experiential and less intellectual. As and when the intellect plays its role, it is only when an attempt is made to express and explain this knowledge in verbal terms. It is the verbalization of suprenal knowledge which terminates in its conceptualization. Even when conceptualized, the transcendent knowledge remains essentially beyond the comprehension of the intellect. It is because of this fact that the mystics have always asserted convincingly that the knowledge which is inherently non-conceptual can never satisfactorily be formulated in such verbal terms that are intellectual. The Trikites, thus, speak of this knowledge as being recognitive (*pratyabhijñā*), or that form of knowledge which concerns itself with the Self (*ātmā-jñāna*) or with Śiva (*Śiva-anubhūti*). The higher knowledge, or what in philosophical terms is called the recognitive knowedge (*pratyabhijñā-jñāna*), can never be intellectually apprehended or verbally formulated unless the state of *pratibhā* is attained. The term *pratibhā* has a specific connotation within the Trika framework. It is through the use of this term that the Trika has endeavoured to explain as to what supernal knowledge is all about. The term specifically denotes that state of knowledge which is immediate or non-mediatory (*aparokṣa*). The supernal knowledge is said to be immediate becuase it is not dependent either on sense-perception or upon intellectual reasoning. In contrast to this intuitive knowledge, we have mediate knowledge (*parokṣa-jñāna*). The mediate knowledge is completely dependent both upon the sense-perception as well as upon intellectual reasoning. On account of its dependence upon the senses and reason, this knowledge accordingly is termed as being empirical, and so has functional value only within the phenomenal realm.

It is maintained that the supernal knowledge is totally experiential in nature. The opponent can equally say that empirical knowledge is as experiential as is supernal knowledge supposed to be. But there is a difference between the two forms of knowledge. In supernal knowledge consciousness does not go out of itself to the object, whereas empirical knowledge has its source in the object. There can be no empirical knowledge apart from the object. Further, there always exists distinction between the knowing subject and the object that is known. Insofar as supernal knowledge is concerned, there does not exist any gap between the subject and the object that is cognized. In supernal knowledge the knowing subject, both epistemically and ontically, becomes one with the object that is cognized. It means that the knowing subject becomes essentially the object that is cognized. The ontic unity is experienced at the core of Being. It is not experienced conceptually. The conceptual formulation of the experience is accomplished when one comes out of it. This experience of unity may be explained by making use of the following example. When we say that Devadatta imitates Yajñadatta (*Devadattaḥ Yajñadattam anukaroti*), we mean that the former does exactly the same as the latter.[23] What this amounts to saying is this: When the Trikites say that it is upon the attainment of supernal knowledge that an individual experiences complete unity with Śiva, the statement has to be understood literally.

Day-to-day experience tells us that no form of knowledge can be actualized apart from the senses and the object that is to be cognized. The senses are a medium through which is established a link between the subject and the object. Upon establishing the contact with the object, there then is reflected, through the organ of perception, the image of the object upon the intellect, which in turn attempts to apprehend it in terms of cognition. Cognition of an object, thus, is obtained when there is complete understanding as to what it is, which, upon its conceptualization, is expressed and comunicated verbally. In this way the cognition of an object becomes knowledge. This process of realizing ordinary form of knowledge in not, according to Trikites, applicable to the knowledge which is supersensible. If so, then the question arises: From where does it come from? For the Trikites the supersensible knowledge is, first and foremost, non-mediated knowledge, and so its source is nothing else than the Self itself. As the Self and Śiva are identical, so it is but natural to say that it is Śiva or the Self which is the source of supernal knowledge. The emergence of this knowledge is unlike that of ordinary knowledge. The knowledge that is ordinary emerges in the form of images or concepts. In the case of supernal knowledge there is total absence of images and objects. It arises, so we are told, like a flash of lightning.[24] Since it neither depends upon the object nor upon the sense-organs, so the supernal knowledge is termed as being *a priori*, whereas the ordinary knowledge is dependent upon the external support, which means that it is *a posteriori.*

The indeterminate character of supernal knowledge tells us that it is contentless, that is, it is formless. Is it not a mere verbal jugglery to say that the supernal knowledge is formless when we know that no knowledge is possible unless it has a form? Can we speak of that which is formless as knowledge at all? It is like to be in deep sleep. In deep sleep we never have knowledge of anything. For the Trikites the supernal knowledge is the knowledge of consciousness itself, and consciousness has no form or shape or size or quality. Consciousness is awarenss. If so, it means that it is aware of itself, and so is centered upon itself. To have the experience of consciousness at its deepest level denotes that one has the experience of the cosmos within, and which explains the universal character of supernal knowledge. The linking of the experience of consciousness as being identical with the cosmos tells us that the latter is the manifestation of the former, and so consciousness, on account of its universality, is all-comprehensive. It is upon the basis of this experience that the theory of correspondence between the macrocosm and mircrocosm is established. This correspondence between the two is given the yogic expression thus: *yatha piṇḍe, tatha brahmāṇḍe,* which, when translated, means that the cosmos exists within the body.[25] In this manner is established the Tāntric thesis of unity between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Insofar as the phenomenal diversity is concerned, it occurs on account of ignorance to which the atomized individual is subject on accout of inherited and acquired impurities. Upon the removal of impurities, and thereby of ignorance, is experienced the self-shining and the universal nature of consciousness, and in terms of which is apprehended the cosmic unity of Being.

VALIDATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The assertion of the Trikites concerning intuitive knowledge (*pratibhājñāna*) as being charcterized by unity needs to be validated. It is with regard to the validation of knowledge that the Indian schools of thought stand divided in their opinion. There are some schools who opine that knowledge can be validated only through external means (*parataḥ prāmāṇya*), whereas other schools of thought uphold that knowledge validates itself (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*), and so is in no need of validation at all. It is to the latter view to which the Trikites adhere.

They who opine that knowledge is dependent upon external means, or means other than itself, assert that the true test of knowledge is to find out as to whether it is causally efficacious (*arthakriyā* or *saṁvādipravṛtti*). What it means is this: Mere cognition of an object does not terminate in knowledge. Take the case, for example, of a chair. It is not a mere perception of a chair which gives us the knowledge of the chair. The statement—*this is a chair*—is neither true nor false in itself. It is upon putting the chair to practical use that we come to know as to whether the object we have cognized is actually a chair or not. If the cognized object functions in accordance with the characteristics of a chair, then our knowledge is true. It is, thus, the functionality of the cognized object which ultimately validates our chair-knowledge. The first knowledge of the chair, which is prior to the testing of the chair as a chair, does not exactly tell us that the object we have perceived is really chair. It is upon putting the chair to the practical use that we affirm or negate the first knowledge we have had of the chair. It boils down to this: We find that the original knowledge is either affirmed or negated by the second knowledge, which is external to the first knowledge. It is, thus, from outside from where the validation of knowledge comes from.

The theory of causal efficacy as the main means of validating knowledge is not acceptable to the Trikites. They are of the view that knowledge validates itself, which means that it is not dependent for its affirmation upon external means. The main critique that is offered against the theory of efficacy as the test of knowledge is this: It leads to *infinite regress.* If the first knowledge, which is neutral in nature, depends for its affirmation upon the second knowledge, then the second knowledge likewise will depend for its affirmation upon the third one, and the third on the fourth one and so on *ad infinitum*. If this be the case, then knowledge can never be validated. This is not, therefore, the proper or appropriate method of validating knowledge. If the external means do not validate knowledge, then how is it to be validated? The answer is: Knowledge validates itself, which means that no external means are needed for the validation of knowledge.

It is pointed out by the Trika thinkers that the causal efficacy cannot be made as the basis of validating knowledge for the following reasons. They point out that even illusory knowledge is efficacious. When one, in pitch darkness, mistakes a rope for a snake, he is as terror-stricken as he would be upon seeing an actual snake. This does not make illusory knowledge true. Upon the negation of illusion, we come to know that the snake-knowledge we had was not real. The illusory knowledge, upon its apprearance, appears to be real (*arthakriyākārī*), and therefore efficacious. The efficacy of illusory knowledge does not mean that the knowledge is authentic or real. If illusory knowledge is inauthentic, then how can the characteristic of efficacy be imputed upon it? To the extent the illusory knowledge lasts, to that extent it has an effect upon the cognizer. The terror of the illusory snake, for example, will be experienced till the time the illusion continues to be. The efficacy of illusory knowledge, thus, is dependent upon considering the illusory as real. The efficacy of illusory knowledge disappears the moment it is negated by the right knowledge. Although the illusory knowledge may be as efficacious as the real one, this does not make it real. Were the illusory knowledge to be treated as real, then it would never be negated. Thus writes Abhinavagupta:

> The appearance of pragmatic value is just another appearance, and so the presence of pragmatic value (*arthakriyā-kāritva*) is not the reality of things.[26]

If knowledge for its validation is not dependent upon the external sources, then the question arises: How are we to validate it? The stock-in-trade answer of the Trikites concerning this question is that knowledge validates itself, which may be construed to mean that knowledge affirms or negates itself. This standpoint tells us that knowledge is to be considered as valid to the extent it is not contradicted. It is coherence or non-contradiction (*bādhābhāva*) which is the real test as to whether knowledge is true or false.[27] For a Trikite knowledge and reality are identical, because the former is nothing but the appearance of the latter. If knowledge is the appearance of that which is actual, then both are to be seen as being one. What one knows, thus, is that which is real.

This understanding of knowledge as being identical with that which is real or actual raises the question with regard to the nature of illusory knowledge. According to this thesis, illusory is as representative of the actual as is really real knowledge. If this be the case, then we shall not be able to differentiate the illusory from the real. This is a situation which is untenable and unsatisfactory. The Trikites assert that the illusory knowledge is really real to the degree or extent illusion lasts. Why? Because during the period of illusion it is both cognitive and efficacious. The illusory nature of knowledge is known only upon the negation of illusion. From this it must not, however, be construed that the Trikites propound a view which says that knowledge is Reality itself. Rather the Trikites speak of a hierachical gradation of ideal Reality. The objective world, or the entities therein, are not the projection of individual consciousness, but of Universal Consciousness, which is Śiva, or what philosophically is termed as the Absolute. Insofar as illusion is concerned, it is seen as the projection of individual consciousness on account it being under the influence of impurities. As the illusory knowledge is taken to be real during the period of its persistence, so the empirical knowledge of the world, which is dependent upon the limited subject, is viewed to be real. It is upon the negation of the apparent or the illusory that the real is known. In religious terms it means that Reality as it is in itself is known upon the removal of impurities, and thereby of ignorance. The Real, thus, is differentiated from the apparent or the illusory, as the former represents the Absolute, and the latter is seen as being ontically apparent, and so not really real.

KNOWLEDGE AND ERROR

Related to the question of knowledge is that of error. The Trika theory of error (*ajñāna*) does not believe in saying that the errorneous knowledge is no knowledge, or that it is non-existent (*asat*). Were this knowledge to be identified with that which is *absent,* then we will have no cognition of anything. The knowledge that is erroneouss (*apūrṇakhyāti*) is not to be treated as being no knowledge. It would mean that the illusory knowledge, which is erroneous, is not to be identified with the vacuity which *absence* denotes. The Trikites think of erroneous knowledge as being identical with incomplete knowledge. It is so because of it being the appearance (*ābhāsa*) of consciousness. There is no, for example possibility for illusion to occur unless consciousness projects itself as the object of illusion. As the appearance of the object is dependent upon consciousness, so the apparent object has to be seen to be real until its apparent character is known. One of the aspects of the apparent or of the illusory object is that it does not enjoy autonomy. It exists by depending upon other than itself. An apparent object, thus, is an entity that is projected. Whatever degree of reality such an entity is imputed with, it derives it from the source from which it emerges. The projected entity, however, has not to be seen as a real copy of the material entity that exists outside of consciousness. Rather it is a self-projected reflection of consciousness upon itself. The illusory object, even though a projected one, has no ontic status. Whatever value it has, it is simply epistemic in nature.

The ultimate aim of the theory of error, particularly as developed by the Trikites is to find out as to what is the ontological status of knowledge concerning the phenomenal world. The world, which we experience as being outside of consciousness, but of which we are somehow a part, is not as unreal as is the object of illusion. It is real in the sense that it is the self-extension of Paramaśiva, and so is said to be the appearance of the Universal Consciousness. It is not only the world, but the limited subject too, which, according to the Trikites, is the self-projection of the Universal Consciousness. The error that the limited subject does with regard to the knowledge of the world is to think of the apparent as being ultimately real, which would mean that the apparent is as autonomous and independent as is the Absolute. It would be a philosophical mistake to think of two independent entities as being their own cause or treat them as self-existing entitites. Such a thing does not exist anywhere. The objective entities, and experience confirms it, are caused entities, and so to consider them as independent and autonomous would be a philosophical blunder. Mistake, thus, lies in taking the apparent as real. It is this erroneous knowledge of the apparent as real which is equated with the knowledge that is illusory. This individual illusion exists within a greater illusion, and so is "like a dream within a dream, or like a boil within the goitre."[28]

The knowledge that is illusory should not be considered as being identical with or equivalent to no-knowledge. Whatever its character may be, it definitely is knowledge. It is a knowledge which is erroneous, and so is to be considered as an incomplete (*apūrṇa*) one. It is as incomplete as is the worldly knowledge that is acquired either through the intellect or the senses. The empirical knowledge is incomplete because this knowledge never enables the individual to have the power of knowing that which is real. In other words, empirical knowledge has no capacity of terminating in the knowledge of the real as it is in itself.

The world we know is the one that is apparent, and not the one which tells us as to what it is in itself. The empirical knowledge, thus, may be said to be the result of the ideational activity of the all-inclusive Universal Consciousness. Even though the world may be a projection or reflection of Śiva, yet it is essentially one with Śiva. The world and Śiva are one on account of the fact that the former has its ground in the latter. The world is known what it essentially is in itself the moment it is cognized as being a reflected manifestation of Śiva.

ERROR AND IGNORANCE

The notion of error in knowledge is directly linked to the idea of ignorance (*avidyā*). It is an axiomatic standpoint of all the Indian schools of thought that ignorance is the root-cause of all the existential problems which an individual existent experiences while in the world. As ignorance is considered to be the cause of human condition, then the question arises: How should the human condition be treated or interpreted? One of the interpretative approach to the human condition that is made use of is based upon the assumption that an individual being, in accordance with the nature of his deeds, is, upon death, reborn again. The condition of rebirth is determined by the kind of deeds he has done previously. Deeds or *karman* are said to be of two kinds: the accumulated ones and the ones that are being performed in the present. Collectively both types of action determine the future birth of an existent. The present condition, whether pitiable or good, is solely dependent upon what one has done previously. In this entire existential drama God has no place. It is the individual who himself determines his future.

It is an *a priori* assumption of all Indian schools of thought that an individual, upon death, is reborn again in accordance with the nature of deeds he has performed in his previous existences. This endless cycle of transmigration of the individual will continue till the time the wheel of becoming is not brought to cessation. It is upon the attainment of soteric liberation from existential bondage that an individual is enabled to transcend the condition in which he finds himself. If the individual condition is dependent upon *karman,* then what is the role which ignorance plays in this entire drama? Insofar as the role of ignorance concerning the individual transmigration is concerned, it is seen to be the fundamental cause of what we are. It is on account of ignorance that we perform deeds that are responsible in giving rise to human bondage, or what may be called the cycle of transmigration. It is upon the removal of ignorance that the soteric freedom, and thereby freedom from human condition, is realized. The Indian schools of thought, however, differ in their interpretation about the content or nature of liberation. Each school has interpreted the soteric freedom in the context of their respective metaphysical standpoint concerning the nature of Reality.

For ignorance (*a-jñāna*) must not be equated with the absence of knowledge. Ignorance does not not denote total absence of knowledge. Ignorance, rather, is seen to be characterized by a knowledge that is partial, erroneous, and incomplete. If so, then it is absolutely wrong to identify ignorance with the state in which knowledge is totally absent. Were ignorance to be equated with the absence of knowledge, then we would have no possibility of knowing anything, which would denote a condition or state of utter chaos and darkness. Since man has the possibility of knowing that which may, at the present jucture, be unknowable, it means that ignorance cannot be equated with the absence of knowledge. It has, rather, to be seen as a state in which one's knowledge is either incomplete or erroneous.[29] As man is a sentient being, so to say that ignorance equals the absence of knowledge would be reducing human beings to the condition of insentiency.[30] Further ignorance is not to be treated as being innate to humanity. Were the case to be such, then its eradication would be an impossibility. As ignorance is removable, so it is accordingly said to be adventitious. It is on account of its adventitious nature that ignorance, upon the emergence of right knowledge, exists no more.

THE DYADIC NATURE OF IGNORANCE

The dyadic classification of ignorance has its roots in the twofold classification of knowledge itself. Ignorance, like knowledge, is said to be of two types: existential ignorance (*pauruṣa-ajñāna*) and intellectual ignorance (*bauddha-ajñāna*). Before we go into a detailed description concerning the types of ignorance, it would be of utmost importance, at this juncture, to find out as to how ignorance is seen as the cause of human bondage. An individual being, who essentially is free and unlimited, experiences bondage as well as various types of limitations by mistakenly taking that to be real which, in fact, is unreal. It is this mistaken apprehension or understanding which is termed as ignorance. This misapprehension is not only intellectual in nature, but is also existential in orientation. The bondage or limitation that an individual being experiences is not only of material nature, but is also characterized by mental hurdles (*bādha*). Since bondage comes to be on account of incomplete knowledge, which is equivalent to ignorance, it means that bondage is as adventitious as is ignorance. So bondage is not at all innate to humanity. It is on account its adventitious nature that bondage is negated upon the arrival of freedom. The human bondage, thus, may be said to be nothing else but the state of ignorance, and upon the removal of ignorance is experienced the the actual freedom, which is the nature of his Being.

Ignorance is termed to be erroneous on account of it having the content of illusion. So erroneous knowledge, that is, ignorance, is identical with illusion. If illusion and erroneous knowledge are identical, then the question is: What is the content of this knowledge? Erroneous knowledge is affirmed to be that which is characterized by a subject-object duality (*dvaita-prathā*). Whenever and wherever duality is experienced, there one sees everything to be separate or discrete. It is the sense of difference or separation which, according to the Trika, is the essense of ignorance. This sense of difference between the subject and the object, between the subject and subject, and between the object and object, is based upon the method of exclusion and contrast. It is by contrasting one object with the other that an identity of an object is established. It is this experience of separation which is seen to be responsible for giving rise to human bondage.[31] In contrast to the dualism which has its roots in erroneous knowledge, we have absolute monism in terms of which the sense of differentiation is completely transcended. The experience of the Absolute as one is occasioned upon the emergence of perfect or complete knowledge. Accordingly is termed this knowledge as supernal, as one, on account of this knowledge, reaches the desired soteric goal, which is: Freedom from human bondage.[32]

Insofar as one relies upon the existence of empirical ego, one is bound to experience human bondage. The limited self does not know its luminous and unbound nature on account of various impurities and ignorance. These impurities, as it were, veil the self, and thereby does not allow the luminous rays to come out into the open. It is upon the eradication of impurities that the actual nature of the self shines in its fullness, and thereby the limitedness of the self totally disappears. Should we say that the limited self, upon the attainment of soteric enlightenment, disappears in the Universal Self. It is this submergence (*samāveśa*) of the limited self into the Universal Self which is termed as liberation (*mokṣa*), because now nothing remains save the Absolute.

When ignorance is further analyzed, it is discovered that it is identical with impurities (*mala*). Ignorance, thus, denotes the state of spiritual impurity.[33] It is due to impurities that the self-shining nature of consciousness is obscured, and the resultant state, on account of obscuration, is termed as that of darkness (*tamas, timira*). It is the nature of impurities to obscure (*āvaraṇa*) the luminous nature of consciousness.[34] As the essential nature of the self remains hidden on account of impurities, so consequently the individual subject is made to experience the bondage of human finitude.

The Trika philosophy has classified impurities into three types, which are: the *āṇava-mala,*[35] *māyīya-mala,*[36] and *kārma-mala.* The first and the last impurity are said to be the product of *māyīya-mala.*[37] *Māyā* is said to be that principle whereby the experience of bondage is actualized. As the other two impurities are the products of *māyā,* so it would not be improper to say that their eradication would be accomplished the moment the *māyīya-mala* is removed. It is in this context that Abhinavagupta says that "the name *māyīya* (is) given to the impurity of seeing difference (and so may be considered) just a name; all the three impurities are also *māyīya* by virtue of being the product of *māyā.*"[38]

Upon veiling the Self (*ācchādana*), the impurities thereby reduce it to the level of a limited individual subject and in terms of which is experienced, on the one hand, difference between entities by contrasting them against each other and, on the other hand, the individual subject is unable to exercise the freedom of will, knowledge and action. Consequently he remains bound to a form of existence that is bound and finite. Insofar as casual relationship among the impurities is concerned, it is not to be understood as one leading to the other. Rather their relationship is to be understood as that of interdependence, which means that the existence of the one apart from the other is not possible. In addition to impurities, there are limiting factors (*kañcukas*), which too are the products of *māyā* and about which we have briefly spoken elsewhere. They too, are responsible in veiling the luminous nature of the self, and the factors are: *vidyā, kalā, rāga, niyati,* and *kāla.*

As we have already pointed out, ignorance, like knowledge, is of two types: intellectual ignorance (*bauddha-ajñāna*) and existential ignorance (*pauruṣa-ajñāna*). It is basically the existential ignorance which is responsible in giving rise to the sense of I-am-ness (*ahaṁkāra*), and subsequently the individual subject has the experience of himself as being a limited creature, which he actually is not. To discover that one is limited denotes one's contingency. And to be contingent tells us as to how much limited one is in the exercise of will. To be limited in the exercise of freedom is the true sign of one's unfreedom or bondage.

This experience of unfreedom, above all, results in a cognition which sees the self as being different from Śiva, or what technically is called the supreme I-consciousness. To be limited means that one functions within the structure of temporality,[39] which denotes that it is the law of restriction (*niyati*) which determines the range and scope of activities which an individual may undertake.

Insofar as intellectual ignorance is concerned, it expresses itself in terms of conceptual knowledge (*vikalpa-jñāna*), which remains restricted to, or dependent upon, concepts or objects, and so is a knowledge that is contingent. Such a knowledge can never terminate in the cognition of that which is actual or real. As such, this knowledge has only a functional value. Thinking of himself as a limited being, the individual thereby develops such a conceptual framework which is space-time bound and whose content is based upon the experience of difference, that is, it is a knowledge that is acquired through the process of contrast and comparison. In discovering himself to be different from the other, the individual, thus, restricts the scope of knowledge to the object with which he compares himself. Also whatever measure of knowledge he has of himself, it is limited to his ego, which he considers to be actual and authentic. It is this limited knowledge, or the knowledge that is egocentric, which does not terminate in the realization of soteric liberation. Rightly, therefore, it is said that the intellectual knowledge is characterized by confusion.

One of the features of conceptual knowledge is that it is always determinate, which means that consciousness is continuously dependent upon the external object for the realization of knowledge. Prior to the emergence of determinate knowledge, there exists a state that is purely indeterminate, and so in this state no distinctive type of knowledge arises. Trika is of the opinion that there is no possibility for knowledge to come into being unless it is willed by the mind. The external object initially is illumined by the external light, which consequently is reflected upon the intellect. Although the reflection of the object affects consciousness, yet the knowledge that emerges at this stage is non-conceptual, and so is termed as indeterminate. It is upon the completion of this process that the arising of determinate knowledge is actualized.

When an individual, at the level of indeterminate knowledge, says: *I am seeing a tree,* he is not saying that, to the exclusion of other objects, he is seeing only a particualr tree. There are many other images being reflected upon the intellect through the eye. If this be the case, it means that the individual being is also aware of objects that are different from the tree. The question that arises at this juncture is this: If the individual is aware of other objects in addition to the tree, then why does he speak only of the awareness of the tree? It is because of the fact that the mind focuses its attention only upon the tree to the exclusion of other objects. It is the object tree alone that is carried through the process, which ultimatley terminates in the arising of determinate knowledge. It must be clear by now that the determinate knowledge comes into being when the mind selects a particualr object for its attention among a mass of objects.[40] Whenever the determinate object is cognized anew, the cognizer immediately associates himself with the cognition he had previously of the object. In associating the present cognition of the object with the previous one, he thereby finds many features common between the object that he has cognized now and the object he has previously cognized. How does it happen? Upon the perception of the object, there arise a mass of sensations, which immediately revive the memory of the perceived object. Once memory of the object is revived, there come into play the feelings the cognizer had of the object in the past. At this stage comparison of the perceived object with the revived one is made, and thereby are discovered features that are common to both of them.[41]

In contrast to the intellectual knowledge, which essentially is determinate, we have existential knowledge, which is purely mental in nature.[42] To the extent knowledge remains under the influence of impurities, to that extent knowledge and ignorance are seen to be identical. This existential ignorance, thus, gives rise to the experience of limitation. As this ignorance is psychic in nature, so its causes too must be internal. Insofar as intellectual ignorance is concerned, it is completely dependent upon external causes.[43] When both forms of ignorance, existential as well as intellectual, come together, they cause saṁsāric bondage to be. It is on account of the saṁsāric bondage that an individual being, while going through the endless cycles of transmigration, suffers from the limitation of finitude, which means that the individual is autonomous neither in the exercise of will nor has the capacity of attaining to the state of knowledge that may terminate in soteric freedom. It is upon the eradication of existential as well as intellectual ignorance that freedom from finitude, and thereby from limitations, is realized. The realization of soteric freedom denotes that the individual returns to the primal state of unity or indeterminancy, which is the nature of Reality. In this manner is reached the ultimate goal of life.

Remembrance and Knowledge

We have seen that knowledge arises (when the light of consciousness throws its luminous light upon the object of cognition. Upon receiving light from consciousness, the object reveals itself, and it is this revelation or manifestation which terminates in knowledge. There is, thus, no possibility for knowledge to emerge apart from the revelatory light of consciousness.) It all tells us that the object has no capacity whatsoever of giving rise to knowledge unless it is apprehended by the subject. Since it is the self which cognizes the object, it means that there will be utter darkness if the existence of the self is denied. It is, therefore, the self which actualizes or gives birth to knowledge.

There are some schools of thought, particularly the ones that are Buddhist, who deny the existence, actual or potential, of the self. For them change is the name of the game. How can we speak of a permanent substance like the self when everything is subject to becoming? Assert the Buddhists. Even if the self is granted some kind of existence, it can exist only for a moment (*kṣaṇa*). A thing that exists only for a moment is almost equal to non-existence. Change, according to Buddhists, is possible of that which is insubstantial. Since an individual being is seen as a compound of five aggregates, which are individually as well as collectively insubstantial, so the question of a permanent self does not arise at all.

The Buddhist assertion concerning the individual being as being insubstantial and impermanent means that there is no such an entity as a permanent self. If an individual being is as insubstantial and impermanent as any other phenomenal entity, then the question arises: Who is it who knows or gathers knowledge of that which is knowable? As Buddhists say that there is no permanent self, so for them knowledge is seen as being representative consciousness.[44] What it means is this: Knowledge is but the representation of a state of consciousness that has preceded the existent one. Since both consciousness and the knowable object are said to be momentary, so consciousness does not have an object of its own. Rather the object that is being cognized is the replica of the one that had previously been cognized. Were consciousness to have its own object, then it would no more be remembrance, as knowledge would no more be expressible as that (*saḥ*).

The assertion that both consciousness and the knowable are momentary has given rise to a host of problems. One of them is this: The moment the momentary subject tries to reach the momentary object, that very moment neither of them would be existing, as both of them would have become extinct. It is, therefore, difficult to maintain that the experience that has emerged is the replica or representation of the experience that has passed. Even the emergent experience would have ceased to be even before having known it. So it is not logically possible to maintain that memory is possible within the context of perishability of knowledge.[45]

Memory is possible when a permanent self is postulated. It is such a self who can recollect the experiences he may have had in the past. Upon recollecting the past experiences, the self thereby transforms such experiences into knowledge. The Buddhists do not agree with the assertion that the existence of a self is a necessity for the actualization of memory. For them memory is always associated with the absence of the object that is being remembered. The time we recollect an object that we may have cognized in the past, it is accomplished in the absence of that object. And for this reason the remembered object always is referred to as "that" and not as "this." In case permanence is imputed to the self or to the object, then there will be no absence of the object, which will amount to saying that the replication of the object that had previously been experienced or known will not be possible. According to the Buddhists, the actualization of past experience in the form of recollection is accomplished by a link that connects the past experience with the emergent one. The link that connects the emergent experience with the one that has passed is termed as a kind of residual trace (*saṁskāra*), which remains latent in the subconscious mind (*ālaya-vijñāna*). It is upon activating the latent traces that memory recollects the past event, and thereby represents it as the replica of the experience that has ceased to be.

This theory of the Buddhists concerning memory as being the actualization of residual traces does not answer the fundamental question, which is: What is the locus (*ādhāra*) of the traces? Since everything is momentary, it is difficult to find a permanent place where these traces can be stored. If momentariness denotes destruction of the existent entity, and that which emerges is merely a copy of the object that is no more, then what remains between the two moments of destruction and emergence? Moreover, remembrance is possible if there exists the person who remembers what he has experienced in the past. Even if it is granted that the residual traces are responsible in replicating anew the cognitions of the past, the fact still remains that residual traces can represent the former object and not the actual experience which the object had generated previosuly upon its cognition. If this be the case, then no action whatsoever would ensue. We know, however, that each cognition gives rise to an action, and the nature of action is dependent upon the kind of experience which the cognition gives rise to. If we have a painful experience, we would like to avoid it, which means that the revival of such an experience is least possible. In the context of Buddhist theory of momentariness it is not possible at all to revive the past experiences on account of them having ceased to be. The Buddhists, thus, are unable to give a logical account concerning remembrance as the source of knowledge.

Remembrance, point out the Trikites, is not a mere revival of latent traces in the mind. There is no possibility of memory to occur unless the object, even in its representative form, is present. What it means is this: The object that has previously been cognized is, at the time of actualization of memory, again presented to consciousness in the form of representation. Moreover, the object that is remembered terminates in the characteristic judgement as "that" as well as gives rise to an activity which the experience of the object is expected to. This is possible if the represented object is associated with the time of previous perception as well as with the feeling it might have generated.

The determinate cognition, like the limited self, has two aspects, namely, momentary and permanent. The momentary aspect of the self expresses itself when it identifies momentarily itself either with the body, or the vital air, or the intellect. Upon coming to know that the identification is erroneous, there occurs automatically dissolution of it. The permanent aspect of the self persists even when the universal dissolution occurs. In applying this analogy to determinate cognition, it is said that whatever images, through sense-presentation, have been gathered by memory, are either momentary or permanent. The momentary images of memory, upon their recollection, immediately submerge in the Universal Consciousness. There are, however, images which persist and continue to exist as discrete entitites on account of their association with time, place and the limited subject. These images accordingly manifest themselves as entities that are seen to be distinct from the Universal Consciousness. These images remain veiled till the time they are again revived through memory. The veiled state of the previously cognized object is termed as *saṁskāra.*[46] It is the remembering subject which holds these images together and also makes their manifestation possible.

It must be kept in mind that the knowledge that is contingent upon memory is determinate in nature, which means that such knowledge cannot have an object of its own. Why? Because determinate knowledge emerges when there is a reflection of the object that is being cognized upon the intellect. The object of memory is not different from the one that has previously been cognized. The object of memory exists as a discrete entity for the limited subject from the time of its perception to that of remembrance. In this manner remembrance gives rise to knowledge.

References

1. *ĪPV,* 1:71.
2. Representationalism, although considered to be realistic in its approach, basically is a link or bridge between realism and idealism. It also is credited with having paved the way for the emergence of subjective idealism of the Vijñānavādins. Representation of ideas is a theory of perception which upholds that objects are not preceived directly, but indirectly. It is the object which transfers its form to the cognition, and the cognition, while having assumed the form of the object, becomes the representative of the object. In other words, the theory tells us that the objects are inferred from cognition to which they have transferred their form. It amounts to saying that "an object coming in contact with the sense produces a cognition to which the object transfers its form, and it is from the form of the object transferred to the cognition that the existence of that object is inferred." (*Sarvadarśana-saṁgraha* of Mādhavācārya, ed. by K.V. Abhyankar, Poona, 1924, p. 36.) The theory is also known by the name of *nityānumeya-bāhyārthavāda,* or the theory which asserts that the existence of the external object can only be inferred and not directly perceived (cf., *Nyāyamañjarī* of Jayantabhaṭṭa, ed. by Surya Narayan Shukla, part 1, p. 15). The theory is also known as *sākāra-jñānavāda,* or the theory that says that cognitions have form. What it means is this: It is the form of the cognition that is really apprehended in our perception. Cognition, thus, is viewed to be both perception (*grāhaka*) and precept (*grāhya*). In India it is the Sautrāntrika school which adhered to this viewpoint, whereas in the West it was John Locke who propounded this theory by saying: "Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own immediate ideas, which it alone can or does contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them." (*Essays,* 4.1.2.)
3. *ĪPV,* 1:166.
4. Ibid., 1:188.
5. *Vijñāpatimātratāsiddhi* of Vasubandhu, ed. by S. Lèvi, p. 16.
6. *Pramāṇavārttika* of Dharmakīrti, 2.123.
7. *ĪPV,* 1:167.

8. Ibid., 1:167-68.
9. See Śaṁkara on *Vedāntasūtra* (hereinafter cited as *V.Sū.*), 1.1.4.
10. *ĪPV*, 1.1.2: *Kartari Jñātari svātmayādisiddhe maheśvare.*
11. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 2.1: *Tasmin he nirasite sarvamidam megāvaraṇavigamaneva svaprakāśabhānukiraṇavṛndamatyantasvaccham bhāsate nānyatha. . . .*
12. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 1.1.2: *Kartari jñātari svātmanyādisiddhe maheśvare/*
    Ajaḍātmā niṣedham vā siddhim vā vidadhīte kaḥ//
13. *TĀ*, 2.10: *Saṁvit-tattvam svaprakāśam ityasmin kiṁnu yuktibhiḥ/*
    Tadabhāva bhaved viśvam jaḍatvād aprakāśakam//
14. Cf., *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, 17.
15. Śaṁkara on *V.Sū.*, 1.1.4.
16. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 1.1.3: *Kintu mohavaśādasmin dṛṣṭepyanupalakṣite. . . .*
17. *ĪPV*, 2:66.
18. Ibid., 2:85-86.
19. Ibid.
20. *TĀ*, 1.78-79.
21. Ibid., 1.79.
22. Ibid., 1.81-82.
23. *ĪPV*, 1.42: *Tathā ca ghaṭo mama sphuratīti korthaḥ/ Madhyaṁ sphuraṇam spandanam āviṣṭaḥ madrūpātamāpanna eva cinmayatvāt//*
24. *TĀ*, 13.132: *Svayameva yato vetti bandhamokṣatayātmakam/*
    Tat pratibhaṃ mahājñānaṃ śāstrācāryānpekṣi yat//
25. Ibid., 13.177.
26. *ĪPV*,1.8.6: *Arthakriyābhāso'pi ca ābhāsāntaram eva iti artha-kriyākāritvamapi no bhāvāṃ sattvam.*
27. Ibid., 17.6: *Bādhābhāva prāmāṇyam ityetaddartham avaśyasāmarthyo yo bādhavyavahāraḥ. . . .*
28. Ibid., 2.3.13: *Māyāpadam he sarvam bhrāntiḥ tatrapi to svapne iva gaṇḍa sphoṭa iva apareyam bhrāntirucyate.*
29. *TĀ*, 1.25. See *TĀV*, 1.25: *Nānu ajñānaśabdasya apūrṇam jñānamarthaḥ.*
30. Ibid., 1.58.
31. Ibid., 1.30.
32. Ibid., 1.141: *Viśvabhāvaikabhāvātma-svarūpaprathanam hi yat/*
    Aṇunām tatparam jñānam//
33. *TĀV*, 1.189: *Pumān aśuddho bhedamayatvāt.*
34. *TĀ*, 9.71: *Malaścāvāraṇam. . . .*
35. Ibid., 1.56.
36. Ibid., 1.54.
37. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 3.2.5.
38. *ĪPV*, 3.2.5.
39. *TĀ*, 1.37-38.
40. *ĪPV*, 2:40-41.
41. Ibid., 1:54-55.
42. *TĀ*, 6.76.

43. Ibid., 1.40.
44. *ĪPV,* 1:60-61.
45. Ibid., 1:63.
46. Ibid., 1.118-19: *Yo bhāvaḥ pūrvam anubhavakāle taddeśakālapramātrantarasācivyam pṛthak kṛto na ca ahantāyām eva vilīnīkṛtaḥ sa tādṛg eva tamasevācchādya avasthāpitaḥ saṁskāraśabdavācyaḥ.*

CHAPTER 5

The Nature of Reality

The fundamental view of the Trika, as we have already seen above, is to realize the soteriological goal of autonomy from the limited structures of space-time. This autonomy from the limited structures denotes, within the Trika system, of gaining access to the knowledge of the essential nature (*svasvabhāva*) of the Self. The essential or intrinsic nature of the Self is said to be non-different (*abheda*) from the Absolute (*paramaśiva*), or what the *tāntrikas* call the Transcendent (*anuttara*) or the Supreme (*parā*). The Absolute is referred to as the Transcendent on account of it being transcendent to all that that is phenomenal. Equally is the Absolute spoken of as the Supreme on account of it being inconceivable, and so accordingly inexpressible.

It is the transcendent state of the Absolute which a Trika seeker seeks to realize while leading a life of limitations. Upon realizing the transcendent state of autonomy, the question that needs to be answered is this: It may sound philosophic to speak of the Absolute as being Transcendent or Supreme, but do these abstract terms give us any concrete information as to what is the nature of the Absolute? The answer to this question is needed because, in the absence of an answer, it would make no sense to pursue liberation if one does not have a clear conception as to what the goal is, which in our case is nothing else but the knowledge of the Absolute.

Most of the Indian religious systems of thought, particularly the ones who accord the status of revelation to the Vedic knowledge, have an ontology which either is pluralistic or monistic. The systems that have a pluralistic ontology would, more or less, have a conception of Reality that is theistic, and in terms of which more than one real is accepted as an epistemic and ontic norm. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools maintain the existence of several elements like atoms, souls, minds, time, space, God, etc. The Mīmāṁsā, by and large, agree with the classification of the reals of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. The Sāṁkhya-Yoga schools, however, have a bipolar conception of Reality, and so have postulated two fundamental and eternal principles, which exist independent of each other. The two principles are *prakṛti* (the primordial stuff or substance) and *puruṣa* (a spiritual principle). *Prakṛti* is seen as representing the inert or insentient Matter, and is said to serve as the source of all the material and mental formations, whereas *puruṣa* is seen to be the principle of sentiency. As to how *puruṣa* gets caught up within the womb of Matter is not satisfactorily explained. It is upon the coming together of these two principles that evolutionary process of that which is going to be manifest is initiated. Insofar as an individual being remains in the condition that is manifest, to that extent he is seen to be in the state of bondage. It is the disentanglement of *puruṣa* from *parkṛti* that is termed as liberation. In the case of Sāṁkhya the disentanglement is realized through the process of intellectual discrimination, whereas for Yoga system it is realized through the process of interiorization of consciousness. The Sāṁkhya-Yoga systems, thus, locate their soteriological goal in freeing the Self (*puruṣa*) from the paws of Matter (*prakṛti*). Since liberation or freedom from the impact of Matter is realized either through intellectual discrimination or through introversion of consciousness, so no need of God is felt as a source of human liberation. Even though the Yoga may have postulated God as being free from defilements, yet this God is in no manner different from the Self that has gained complete autonomy from Matter.

This bipolar conception of reality had a deep influence later on upon the formation of Tāntric conception of reality. The dualistic Tāntric schools thought of reality as consisting of male and female principles. In the case of Śaivism it meant that Śiva and Śakti are seen to constitute reality, whereas in the case of Vaiṣṇuism it is Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī which are seen to represent reality. This bipolar idea of reality was given a philosophic interpretation in such Tāntric schools which adhered to a kind of theistic monism. At the popular level of religiosity reality is anthropomorphised, and so all the aspects of maleness and femaleness are ascribed unto reality. At the philosophic level the anthropomorphic bipolarity is interpreted as representing two principles of reality: Consciousness (*citi*) and dynamis (*vimarśa, spandana*). Reality inherently, thus, is said to be dynamic, and on account of this dynamism is initiated the double process of manifestation and withdrawal of the cosmos. *Prakṛti*, while representing dynamism, is not separate from

Consciousness (*caitanya*), as is the case in the Sāṁkhya, but is seen to be the very nature of it. It is upon this conceptual paradigm that the *tāntrikas* could easily say that the macrocosm and the microcosm are identical with each other, which means that the former may be found in the latter and the latter may be discovered in the former. It is upon the basis of this Sāṁkhya conception of reality that later on various schools of Tantrism will build up their respective theological structures. In Tantrism this conceptual polarity would assume the form of the Divine Couple, and thereby would affirm the dictum that it is in and through enjoyment (*bhukti*) that salvation/liberation (*mukti*) is attained. In accepting the principle of sensual enjoyment as a valid means of salvation, Tantrism thereby would give an important role to sexuality both in religious and secular contexts.

Insofar as Buddhism is concerned, which does not accept the Vedas as being the repository of revelation, it is a religion which, from its very inception, has never encouraged any form of belief either in God or in a self. The early Buddhism and its various offshoots confined themselves to a kind of realism whereby the reality of empirical becoming could be established. Instead of God, the early Buddhism, or which has come to known as Theravāda Buddhism, believed in the reality of elements (*dharmas*). Although the elements are said to be real, they, however, last only for a moment. The momentary existence of the elements owes its explanation to the Buddha's theory of impermanence (*anityatvā*), which maintains that whatever is phenomenal is impermanent on account of it being insubstantial (*anātmakam*). The phenomenal existence, thus, is seen to be characterized by the momentary (*kṣaṇika*) groups of mental attributes.[1] Moreover the entities that are constitutive of the world are seen to be substanceless, which means that they are destitute of any ontic status. As the world has no ontological basis or value, so it can not be accorded with any degree of reality. The world is real as becoming, and not as something that exists. The world as becoming has only an epistemological status. What it means is this: The world and its entities are continuously coming into being and passing away. This continuous emergence-submergence of entities occurs like as flash of light, or like the picture on a cinema screen.

This stark realism could not appeal to people for long. With the emergence of Mahāyāna there is a complete shift in the focus of Buddhist thinking. This shift of focus becomes quite manifest when the Mahāyāna completely rejects the reality of the momentary existents. In contrast to the theory of momentariness of existents, the Mahāyāna propounds the doctrine of emptiness of entities (*dharma-śūnyatā*). The Mahāyāna, thus, propounded the doctrine of emptiness of the self as well as of entities, whereas the Theravāda Buddhists believed only in the emptiness of the self. The Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness of entities is based upon the Buddha's theory of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). The Mahāyānists interpreted this doctrine in such a manner as to mean that the phenomena occur dependently, which, when interpreted, would mean that no entity comes into existence by itself or independently, but comes into existence by depending upon various causes and conditions. From this analysis the conclusion that is arrived at is this: Phenomena are destitute of an intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), and as such the entities that are constitutive of the world are not merely illusory but are empty of any degree of reality. As the world possess no degree of reality whatsoever, so it must be treated either as a linguistic fabrication (*prapañca*) or the construction of mind. From this it follows that neither Theravāda nor Mahāyāna accept the existence of God or of the self. The former, by confining itself to the empirical analysis of the given, finds no need for a reality that is supermundane, and the latter, while allowing deconstructionism a free play, arrives at the conclusion that everything, including the world we live in, is emptiness, and so the ultimate reality itself is identified with Emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Buddhism, thus, follows a line of thought which is contrary to what the Vedas have propounded.

Insofar as the Vaiṣṇava school of Vallabha is concerned, it professes to be philosophically non-dualist. This assertion of the school, on examination, does not stand the test. The school, however, is much closer to an another Vaiṣṇavite school, namely, the school of qualified non-dualism of Rāmānuja, and so may, within the Trika philosophical framework, be said to be representing such a philosophical viewpoint which is embodied in such *tāntrika* texts that are termed as being dualist-cum-non-dualist (*bhedābheda*). Insofar as the Vīraśaiva school of Basava is concerned, it is very difficult to tell as to what exactly its concept of *sāmarasya* means. The ambiguity of this concept comes to the fore in the context of knowing the exact relationship that exists between a liberated self (*jīvanmukta*) and God. We really do not know whether the liberated one, upon the attainment of the state of liberation, experiences a theistic type of union with God or total submergence in the Absolute. As the school is unclear on this point, so it is not possible to tell as to whether the school is theistic or monistic in orientation. The school that really professes philosophical absolutism is the school of Advaita Vedānta of Śaṁkara. The Absolute of Śaṁkara, so point out the Trika thinkers, has one major defect or deficiency, and it is this: The Absolute of Śaṁkara, being passive (*śānta*)[2] and impersonal, is like an insentient principle that has neither the power of will nor of action. As it is not sufficiently thesitic, so the Vedānta school of Śaṁkara has a tendency of moving towards the doctrine of Emptiness (*śūnyavāda*) of Nāgārjuna.[3]

THE TRIKA VIEW

The Trika Śaivism speaks of ultimate reality as being the Absolute, and so must necessarily be seen as serving the substratum of all that is manifest. And the manifest world, of which we are a part, is but the actual manifestation of the Absolute. The world as the appearance of the Absolute is not unreal or illusory. The absolute Reality, while manifesting itself as the finite world, is nothing but the actual manifestation of Śiva as consciousness. Whatever there is in the world is nothing but Śiva itself. This process of Śiva becoming, for all practical purposes, the world itself is termed as the theory of appearance (*ābhāsavāda*).[4]

The Absolute, which is identical with the all-inclusive Universal Consciousness, is by its very nature beyond that which the space-time phenomenon represents or embodies. It is, thus, accordingly, and rightly so, termed as the Transcendent (*anuttara*),[5] Supreme (*parā*) or Perfect (*pūrṇa*) Consciousness. These qualifications of the Absolute tell us that there is no comparable entity anywhere in the world that can be contrasted to it. On account of its absoluteness, the Absolute can neither be reached nor cognized through the logical process of analysis or reasoning nor can it be explained or expressed through the medium of linguistic concepts. In terms of ordinary language the Absolute, as it is in itself, may be said to be undefinable.[6] Whatever may be empirically said about the Absolute, it has to be in terms of approximations. Conceptually or in linguistic terms we may speak of the Absolute as Śiva, and yet this expression is nothing more than an approximation, and must be treated as such. In fact, the Absolute is neither Śiva nor Śakti nor any other entity that may be conceived,[7] which means that it can neither be treated as "this" (*idaṃ*) nor "that" (*tat*), neither "not this" nor "not that".[8] Whatever is spoken of concerning the Absolute, it is not the actual truth, but only a provisional one.[9] Why is it so? It is so because the intellect has the capacity to express or explain only that which is empirical, that is, space-time bound. The knowledge that is derived or cognized through the intellect is, thus, a conditioned one, which means that the Absolute can never be either perceived or known in conceptual terms.[10]

If the Absolute is undefinable as well as unknowable, then how are we to know it at all? As the Absolute is not a phenomenal entity that can be perceived or cognized, so it, assert the Trikites, can only be intuited or realized. Words are powerless in describing what the Absolute is in itself. Why? Because they have the capacity of describing only that which is definite or determinate, whereas the Absolute *a priori* is indefinite and non-determinate. Insofar as the metaphysical ideas of unity and diversity, of name and form, of space and time, are concerned, they are contingent upon the way the Absolute manifests or appears. The phenomenal world of ours just forms an infinitesimal part of the entire process of manifestation. As the world is an insignificant part of the entire drama of manifestation, so to apply the methods of worldly knowledge to the Absolute are not only unreasonable, but futile.[11]

If the Absolute is unknowable and indefinable, and so beyond the scope of human knowledge, then the question arises as to how are we to know it at all. To make the knowledge of the Absolute possible the Trika speaks of it as Supreme Consciousness (*citi, saṁvid*), which, at the subjective level, is identified with one's own subjectivity, and is objectively spoken of as Śiva. Accordingly we are told that "Maheśvara (the Great Lord) lies as my own self (*svātmā*) and it is proved in the very beginning (*ādisiddha*) as myself who is the doer (*kartā*) and the knower (*jñātā*)."[12] This understanding of the Absolute as the ground of one's self denotes that the subjective self is non-different from the Absolute. It is upon this metaphysical notion of non-difference that Tantrism sees no difficulty in asserting that the microcosm is to be found in the macrocosm and the macrocosm in the microcosm.[13]

THE DYADIC ASPECTS

In order to make the conceptual cognition of the non-cognitive Absolute possible the Trikites speak of the Absolute in conceptual pairs. The Absolute as Paramaśiva or all-inclusive Consciousness is said to be both transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*) and immanent (*viśvamaya*),[14] which is interpreted to mean the all-inclusive and independent (*nirapekṣa* or *anapekṣa*)[15] nature of the Absolute. The immanent aspect of the Absolute is also spoken of as being of the nature of "light and relfection" (*prakāśavimarśamaya*). The Absolute as microcosm is interpreted in the context of what the macrocosm denotes.

This macro-micro model means that the individual self is in possession of the same light which the Absolute possesses. The luminosity of the self, thus, is seen to be like a mirror. Whatever psychic images one forms within, they are reflected upon the mirror, which is but the luminosity of the self. The self as mirror is not like the physical mirror which does not shine in darkness. The self, on the contrary, shines always, and so is in no need of external light or of an illuminator. Insofar as the reflective (*vimarśamaya*) aspect of the self is concerned, it denotes that the self has the power of knowing itself in its perfect purity. The power to know itself means that the self is totally autonomous from all affectations. It is this reflective aspect of the self which distinguishes it from such substances which, like the mirror, have the capacity of receiving reflection. This distinctive aspect of the self means that it, the self, is luminous (*prakāśamaya*) and has the power of knowing itself and others.[16]

What is the significance, it may be asked, in the context of the Universal Self of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa.* The Trikites maintain that the universe is the mainfestation of the Universal Self. What it means is this: The without, which is the external world, of the Universal Self is that which is within it (*svātmabhitti*). As the external world is an extension of the Absolute, so its separation is only apparent and not real. The separation is of the same nature which exists between the mirror and the reflected image.[17] As the reflected image in the mirror is the extension of the object, so the universe is the self-extension of the Absolute. Whenever space-time separation is experienced between the two, it is only apparent and not real.

As the inherent nature of the Absolute is characterized by luminosity and reflection, and which we experience constantly at the subjective level of our being, so the non-cognitive Absolute, maintain the Trikites, is available to human cognition. It is in the human subjectivity in which, as it were, the Absolute incarnates itself. Although the absoluteness of the Absolute may tell us that it is undefinable, yet the description of it has to be in such positive terms that may enable us to have some grasp as to what it is. Accordingly has the Absolute been defined as infinite, eternal, omniscient and omnipotent. It stands to reason that which is infinite or eternal must necesarily be unborn (*aja*) and beginningless (*anādi*).[18] In contrast to Śiva, the world we live in is dependent (*sāpekṣa*) for its every existence upon its source, which is none other than Śiva itself. As Śiva is the actual source of all that is constitutive of the world, so accordingly it is said to be everything, which upholds the ancient maxim: All is one, and One is all. As luminosity is constitutive of Śiva, so it shines forth as light in everything. Although the Absolute is in everything and everything is in the Absolute, yet it transcends everything that is phenomenal. In this manner is established the transcendent and immanent nature of the Absolute. In terms of religious experience it dentoes that God is experienced as absence when it comes to the question of transcendence. It is this aspect of God which is spoken of as the *absence of God* (*Deus absconditus*). Similarly the presence of God in creation is experienced in terms of immanence.

The Absolute as Śiva is said to be identical with consciousness. Were Śiva not of the nature of consciousness, it would never be known, and consequently we would be groping in the abyss of darkness. One of the features of consciousness is that it is self-luminous, and it is on account of the shining nature of consciousness that we are able to know that which otherwise would be unknowable. Accordingly has the Absolute been termed as self-existent and self-illumined (*svaprakāśa*), which means that the Absolute knows itself what it is.[19]

One of the essential features of the Trika concerning the self is that it does not view the Absolute as being equivalent to an impersonal principle. At this point the Trikites differ radically from the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṁkara. The *brahman* of Vedānta is a passive and impersonal principle, and so is destitute of knowledge, will and action. The Absolute of the Trika is identical with the God of theism. Trikism, thus, is a non-dualism which has a strong theistic orientation. The absolute God of Trika not only is in possession of will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*), but is absolutely sovereign or autonomous. The concept of sovereignty of God plays a very important role in the theological thinking of Trika. When the Trikites speak of God as sovereign, they mean by it that God is totally autonomous, and does not at all depend upon anything. The power of sovereignty of God (*svātantrya-śakti*) is clearly reflected by the *vimarśa*, or the reflective, aspect of the Absolute, which means that the divine reflection is not at all dependent on anything, as is the case with will, knowledge and action. These three depend upon what precedes them. It is a power which embodies all other powers of God, and so accordingly is spoken of as the supreme power.[20] It is this idea of supreme power which distinguishes the Trika conception of the Absolute from that of Advaita Vedānta.

The absolute God of Trika is non-different from that which is manifest or manifestable. It is not, therefore, difficult for the Trika thinkers to assert that the pure and impure creation are nothing but Śiva itself,[21] or should we say that both sin and virtue cannot be viewed apart from Śiva. It may be shocking to a self-righteous person to speak of Śiva as being identical both with that which is sinful or virtuous. For a Trikite it is not so, because sin and virtue are provisional concepts, and are not at all applicable to the Transcendent. The Absolute as the Transcendent transcends all that is provisional, or is characterized by duality. It is on account of dualism that subject and object are made to confront each other. There is confrontation between the subject and the object because they are seen to be opposing each other. Wherever and whenever there is dialectical polarization, there one experiences absence in terms of separation. The Absolute of Trika, however, transcends all forms of duality, and so there is no form of conflict or confrontation to be found in it.

LIGHT-REFLECTION DYAD

The Trika Śaivism thinks of the Absolute as being characterized by two essential features, which are luminosity (*prakāśa*) and reflection (*vimarśa*). When the Absolute as Śiva is said to be self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*), it means that it is considered as the spiritual light of consciousness, and in terms of which everything is made manifest, and thereby known. This aspect of the Absolute is self-evident in everything precisely because everything is known through it.[22] It is the function of *prakāśa* to make everything shine, and this it does on account it being luminous.[23] So the nature of consciousness is to be luminous, and due this luminosity consciousness thereby has the power of revealing everything. From this it may be concluded that the Light of Consciousness is manifest in the entire phenomena,[24] as it is on account of this light that the cognitive knowledge is actualized. The Trika calls this kind of non-dualism as being transcendent, and so is spoken of as *parādvaita* or *pratyakṣādvaita,* that is, a non-dualism that can concretely be experienced.[25]

From what we have said above it becomes clear that the luminous aspect of the Absolute serves as the substratum or ground for all that it manifests. The *prakāśa* manifests the manifestable in the same manner as does the intellect (*buddhi*) in constructing images. The Absolute as *prakāśa* manifests that which is within it on account of the power which *vimarśa* embodies. Were the Absolute to be destitute of *vimarśa*, it would be as dead or passive as is the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. It is *vimarśa* which allows the emergence of will, knowledge and action to occur in succession. The *vimarśa* aspect of the Absolute embodies the power of reflection or of thinking, which thereby reveals that there is an innate dynamism to be found within the Absolute. For the *tāntrikas* this dynamism is represented by the feminine principle, and is accordingly analogous to the Sāṁkhya conception of *prakṛti.* At the religious level, this dynamism is embodied by the consort of Śiva, namely, Pārvatī. When the Absolute is seen as Śiva and Śakti, there then occurs the emission of that which is manifest. At the yogic level this feminine principle is represented by the Kuṇḍalinī. Insofar as Kuṇḍalinī remains in an atomized condition, the individual being to that extent will experience bondage. When there is total submergence of Kuṇḍalinī in Śiva, there then is experienced the soteric freedom and in terms of which the individual being itself gets absorbed in the all-inclusive Consciousness, which is Śiva.

It is on account of *vimarśa* that the Absolute as Śakti engages itself in the continuous manifestation (*unmeṣa*) and resorption (*nimeṣa*) of that which is phenomenal. This objective universe, of which we are a part, is seen as the self-extension or expansion (*prasāra, vikāsa*) of Śiva itself. In this process of self-extension Śiva, as it were, assumes the status of a finite being—and all this takes place on account of *vimarśa.*[26] This double-process of expansion and resorption of Śiva is realized by the yogī internally as well as externally. It is of interest to note that this descent (expansion) and ascent (resorption) of Śiva is analogous to his being immanent and transcendent. For the yogī this descent and ascent denotes that he, through the process of introversion, experiences this two-way process within, and is accordingly linked to the opening (*unmeṣa*) and closing (*nimeṣa*) of eyelids. The Trika, thus, does not, as does the Advaita Vedānta, resort to the theory of *lakṣaṇa,* that is, to the indicative power of speech. The Absolute of the Trika shines forth (*sphurattā*) both in creation as well as beyond it. The Absolute, when conceived as God on theistic lines, is seen as possessing infinite attributes. Abhinavagupta, while distinguishing the Trika non-dualism from that of Advaita Vedānta, coins new words like the *paramādvaita, parādvaita,* etc.

The Absolute as consciousness is, according to Trikism, the ontological source or basis of that which appears—and it is this function of the Absolute which is termed as *prakāśa.* Insofar as the self-awareness of the Absolute is concerned, it is accomplished through the power of *vimarśa*. We may, in other words, say that the Absolute is aware creatively of its own Being on account of *vimarśa.* It is *prakāśa* (light of consciousness) and *vimarśa* (reflective awareness which the light has concerning its own nature) that constitute together the fullness (*pūrṇatā*) of consciousness. It is the luminosity or shining of the Absolute which embodies the essence of all that is phenomenal. Were consciousness not to be luminous, then everything would be enveloped by the density of darkness. It is on account of the light of consciousness that the appearance of objects is actualized. It is the very nature of light to appear (*avabhāsana*), and so accordingly the manifest nature of things is made possible.[27] And so all the manifest categories are established in this light. Once established, they appear according to their specific natures (*svabhāva*). That which is not established in the light of consciousness is as unreal as are the horns of a hare. The light of the sun, or any other external light, has only the power of revealing the object, but is not, by any stretch of imagination, its source. In contrast to the external light, the light of consciousness not only allows things to appear, but is their source also.

The absolute Light, while making things manifest, also withdraws them into itself. Since the Light is the source of all things, so it is the point of unity (*aikātmya*) of all the manifest forms.[28] The external universe that we experience or perceive through our senses is but the shining of the light within itself. It is the state (*avasthāna*) of radiant vibration (*sphurattā*) of the light which enables consciousness to become manifest. Although it is the shining of the light which makes things both manifest and diverse,[29] this does not mean that it gets completely merged (*magna*) with things. Were this to happen, then the light would suffer from internal division or modification. We know that light does not suffer from any modification when we, for example, say: "I see the object." It is not the object in itself that we see; rather it is the manifest form of the object that we see. It means that no amount of objectivity can obscure the light of consciousness.

As this light is seen to be the source of everything that exists, so it has been identfied with the Absolute itself. The Absolute of the Trika, however, is not an impersonal principle. As the light is seen to be the shining of the Absolute, so it is said to be the living light of God who is the source of the universe. It is this very God who, as the Light of Consciousness, reveals that which is real and that which is unreal. Accordingly declares Abhinavagupta:

> Thus Bhairava, the Light, is self-evident (*svataḥsiddha*), without beginning. He is the first and last of all things, the Eternal Present. And so what else can be said of Him? The unfolding of the categories of existence (*tattva*) and creation, which are the expansion of His own Self, He illumines, luminous with His own Light, in identity with Himself, and because He illumines

> Himself, so too He reflects on His own nature, without His wonder (*camatkāra*) being in any way diminished.[30]

It is in terms of the symbolism of light that the inner relationship between things is explained. And the entirety of things form an integral part of the Absolute. In contrast to light, the Trika thinkers make use of an another term, namely, that of *vimarśa* or *spandana*. In making use of the terms like reflection or of vibration, the Trikites thereby are making an attempt at describing the Absolute as being dynamic. It is as an active or dynamic Being that the Absolute participates in that which is finite. How? By becoming the finite. While becoming finite, the Absolute simultaneously also reconverts the finite into the infinite. It is the image of space which explains the luminous aspect of the Absolute. Like the infinite space the Absolute is seen as being a pure noetic plenum. Insofar as dynamic aspect of the Absolute is concerned, it is the concept of time that explains it best. As time is movement, so is the Absolute.

The Absolute as consciousness is not static, but is always, as it were, on the move. The dynamic nature of the light of consciousness is quite evident in the context of the flux of cognitions. It is this flux of cognitions which is termed as vibration (*spanda*). With regard to the Absolute it denotes its noetic activity (*jñānātmikakriyā*) of which it is itself the conscious agent (*kartṛ*) as well as perceiver. It all boils down to the fact that apart from the knower there is no possibility for knowledge to exist. What it amounts to saying is that the object of knowledge has its basis in knowledge, and knowledge in the knowing subject, and the knowing subject connects them like a glue.[31] There are, thus, three aspects to the Universal Consciousness, which are: the illuminator (*prakāśaka*), the illumined universe (*prakāśya*), and the light of knowledge (*prakāśa*) which illumines the knowable. All of them are said to be one. Cognitive awareness (*pramā*) is actualized when the acts of perception are attended by the subject, object and means of knowledge. As their manifestation is made by the Light of Consciousness, so they are always present whenever cognition occurs.[32] The entire universe, thus, appears within the realm of universal consciousness upon the manifestation of the subject, object and means of knowledge. When they cease to be, then the objective universe reverts unto undifferentiated consciousness. Reversion of the universe to its undifferentiated state means that the tension between the subject and the object is resolved in the primordial state of unity.

The subject, object and means of knowledge are the aspects of consciousness, and have appropriately been represented by such natural symbols as Fire, Moon and Sun.[33] The subject is linked to the Fire. As the Fire is said to have three abodes, namely, the earth, the sky, and the heaven, so the subject likewise is said to be of triadic nature, namely, the object of knowledge, the means of knowledge and the subject itself. Like Fire, the subject moves upwards, thereby consuming everything that comes into its grasp. The symbol that represents the means of knowledge is the Sun. As the light of the sun illumines everything, so does the means of knowledge. It is the means of knowledge which reveals the object. Lastly, we have the object of knowledge, and it is linked to the Moon. As the Moon shines the reflected light of the sun, so the object shines forth on account of the reflected light. Moreover, the Moon is linked to the nectar of immortality. As the drink of nectar bestows joy, so do the senses derive pleasure upon the revelation of the object. The senses experience delight when the object is cognized.[34]

Unlike the objects of perception, the light of consciousness is not dependent for being perceived upon anything other than itself. In the process of making the universe manifest the light of consciousness illumines itself. As the ultimate principle of revelation, it not only reveals everything, but reveals itself. As one of the characteristics of consciousness is self-awareness, so it is not in need of being known by another. Were the case not so, then the knower of consciousness would have to be known by another, and so on, so forth.[35] But consciousness is not in need of such a knower, as it is always aware of itself.

There in no possibility for any experience to occur unless consciousness is aware of itself, which means that experience is always of personal nature. As the Absolute of Trika is not impersonal, so it is the very Absolute as the Universal Consciousness which reflects not only upon that which appears within it, but equally reflects upon itself. Accordingly we are told:

> The Supreme Lord bears within Himself the reflection of the universe and the (reflection) is His nature as all things. Nor is He unconscious of His nature as such because that which is conscious necessarily reflects on itself.[36]

The act of reflection is termed as *vimarśa.* The term is derived from the root *mṛṣ,* which means to understand, to reflect, or perceive oneself. It is the very nature of the light of conciousness to reflect upon, and thereby be aware of, itself. It is in and through awareness that light knows itself to be the sole reality, and thereby rests within itself. While being totally free and perfect, it knows that it is everything that is existent. Awareness denotes the omniscience of God. Whenever and wherever there is the lack of awareness, there occurs division in the All, which means that the All is divided into mumerous parts. It is the lack of awareness which is termed as ignorance (*ajñāna*), and on account of ignorance we centre our attention on parts rather than upon the Whole. While awareness centres upon itself, it thereby reflects upon its own nature, and so accordingly cognizes itself as the pure subject that unravels the unity of all that *that is*.

Although the light of consciousness is in itself undifferentiated, yet, at the level of awareness, there occurs differentiation. This differentiation occurs when awareness is distinguished from consciousness, which means that it is the objectification of awareness which gives rise to perception. At the microcosmic level we may, therefore, say:

> The one light of consciousness consists of such types of reflective awareness as: 'This is a jar' and 'this is a cloth.' These two are divided from each other and from other subjects as well as from me.[37]

At the macrocosmic level:

> The Light is the supreme reality (*paramārtha*) that encompasses (the categories) from Earth to Paramaśiva, (while) the unfolding (*unmeṣa*) of the reflective awareness of the Heart (of 'I' Consciousness) within it, distinguishes between them.[38]

It must not be construed that awareness by nature is diverse. The awareness of unity or of diversity is inherently same because it is the light of consciousness which illumines them. Thus dynamic nature of awareness is characterized by the "freedom (of consciousness) to unite, separate and hold things together."[39] It is the innate freedom which demarcates consciousness from that which is inert, because the latter is "devoid of the freedom to conjoin and disjoin."[40] It is the very dynamism of consciousness which is responsible in initiating the creative process of generation of the universe by dividing and joining the diverse elements that are within it.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

It is *a priori* and axiomatically affirmed by the Trika thinkers that the real is One and nothing apart from the One is real. If this be the case, then how are we to account for the diversity that we experience in the world? If the One alone is real, does it mean that diversity of any kind is false? The answer which the Trikites give concerning unity and diversity is this: It is from the One from which the diversity proceeds, and it is unto the One to which this diversity reverts back, and thereby dissolves into the undifferentiated unity of the One. This answer could be countered by saying that it is a logical hara-kiri to assert that from the One proceed the many. Why? Because it is logically impossible for the dissimilars to co-exist together or give rise to one another. One dissimilar cannot be the cause of another dissimilar. Moreover, if the variegated world of entities has its source in the One, then how are we to relate the latter to the former? These are some of the questions that will have to be answered coherently and convincingly.

As and when the Trika speaks of reality as One and non-dual, it does not reject the manifest diversity of the world as being of no consequence. Trikites are of the view that it is one and the same reality which not only is the ontological ground of that which appears, but appears or manifests itself in diverse forms. When, for example, consciousness projects the world of diversity in a dream, it does not mean that the two are different, although one experiences them to be so. The dream objects are identical with consciousness on account of them being projections of ideas that are in the mind. In making the use of this analogy the Trika thereby arrives at the conclusion that the world as a manifest diversity is nothing but the projection of the Universal Consciousness, which is Śiva. This interpretation concerning the relationship of the One with the many denotes that the latter is essentially and substantially identical with the former, or rather should we say that the difference that is experienced in the world of objectivity is epistemic and apparent, whereas there is complete ontic identity of that which is experienced as being diverse.[41] Further we are told that the world is not a mere manifestation of Śiva, but is a free expression of Śiva, which means that it is the very nature of reality to manifest itself without any external pressure or internal necessity. It is the nature of reality to engage in the sportive activity (*līlā*) of creational manifestation.[42] The diversity that is constitutive of the world is free or sovereign self-expression of Śiva.[43]

Still the question of relationship between the One and many does not seem to have been answered satisfactorily. Even if it is granted that the world of diversity is but the self-manifestation of the Absolute, which is Paramaśiva, yet the heart of the question remains, which is: How is it possible for the infinite to relate itself to that which is finite? How can the diverse entities of the world, which are finite and conditioned, be related to the Absolute who by very nature is said to be infinite and unconditioned? As both are contraries, so it is not logically possible for them to co-exist together. Even if it is asserted in the face of this logical impossibility that the dissimilars can be related, then we have to contradict our experience, which says that such an occurrence is not possible. It would be like saying that heat and cold can go together. To answer these objections the Trika thinkers maintain that it is within the power of consciousness to project that which seemingly is contrary to its nature. The difference that exists between the dreamer's dream and Śiva's projection of the world lies in this: The dreamer, while projecting the dream-objects in a dream, is unaware of the fact that the dream-objects are his own projections, whereas with Śiva such is not the case. Śiva freely projects the world, and accordinlgy knows that the world is his own projection. When this understanding concerning Śiva as having freely projected the world out of itself is translated into a causal conceptual language, it means that Śiva is both the material (*upādāna*) and the efficient (*nimitta*) cause of the world.[44] Does not this line of thought concerning Śiva as being the material cause of the world imply that, while giving rise to the world, he must necessarily suffer from change and modification, which would result ultimaltely in the destruction of the unity of Śiva itself? To this objection the Trika responds that no internal division or modification occurs in Śiva while giving rise out of itself to the variegated universe of objects. As to how Śiva gives rise to the world of multiplicity is equated with the juice of peacock's egg (*mayūrāṇḍarasavat*). The juice within the egg is colourless, which means that it is devoid of any variety. The fact, however, is that the juice contains the variety of colours that are constitutive of peacock's plume. By making use of this analogy, the point that the Trika wants to drive at is this: As the variety of colours is contained in the seemingly colourless juice, so does this world of variety exist in Śiva in its undifferentiated state. While bringing forth the world of variety, there occurs no change insofar as Śiva's undifferentiated state of unity is concerned. The world, however, does not exist as a potentiality in Śiva, whereas such is not the case with the egg or with the seed. The plant exists potentially in the seed, and likewise exists the peacock in the juice of the egg. The plant will come out of the seed when necessary conditions are made available. Similar is the case with the peacock. There is no freedom involved either in the case of the egg or of the seed. If this deterministic necessity is applied to Śiva, then we would be depriving Śiva of his freedom. It would mean that an unfree Śiva would be bound to give rise to the world of variety if it is assumed that the world exists potentially in Śiva. The Trika rejects this interpretation while upholding the absolute freedom of Śiva. Śiva is totally free either to manifest or not to manifest the world.[45]

The question that now needs to be answered is as to whether the manifestation of the world is real or unreal. If it is assumed that the world of manifestation is real, then the Trika absolutism falls flat. If it is accepted, as do the Vedāntins, that the world is illusory, then we are living in a world of shadows. In order to answer these question, we will have, first of all, to understand as to what exactly the terms "real" denotes. A real is said to be that which is verifiable, or which is not contradicted or negated by experience. An illusion is said to be unreal because it is negated by experience. The dream objects are said to be unreal beacuse they are negated by the waking state. Similarly snake on the rope disappears upon the appearance of light. The illusory objects, however, are experienced to be real during the period of illusion. We come to know that an illusion is an illusion when it is negated. The illusory objects are not unreal in the sense of a sky flower, which means that we do not deny their existence at all precisely because of them being the objects of perception. It is upon being cognized that, the illusory object is termed as being unreal because it does not conform to the conventional norms of reality of the waking state.

The real, in contrast to the unreal, is never subject to negation. The unreal as illusory is real in the sense of it having been cognized. Now the question arises: Is the manifestation of the world, in the context of Trika system, real or unreal? As and when the Trika makes the use of the term *ābhāsa*, it means by it the manifestation of all that appears. The Trikites do not at all deny the existence of that which appears, which means that which is manifest is real and not as unreal as are the horns of a hare. As to whether the manifestation is subjective or objective, it matters little, as in both cases there is *ābhāsa*. As the manifestation is the extension of all-inclusive Universal Consciousness, so the manifest is real, and not a figment of imagination.

THE POWERS OF THE ABSOLUTE

The Absolute is said to be of the nature of consciousness. One of the aspects of consciousness is the power of self-reflection. This reflective aspect of consciousness expresses itself in such statements as, for example, "I am conscious" (*ahaṁ vimarśa*). This cognitive activity of consciousness is linked to the ripples upon the waters of an ocean or of a lake. According to the Trika, it is the effulgence (*sphurattā*) or vibration (*spanda*) within consciousness. It is in the context of self-awarenes of conciousness which terminates in self-awareness.[46] Self-reflection is the basic activity of consciousness. It is in the context of self-awareness of consciousness that we must take into consideration the three powers of the Absolute, which are: will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). It is on account of these powers that Śiva makes the manifestable manifest. Prior to taking into consideration these powers, we shall however find out as to what the concept of power in Trikism means or denotes.

The conception of power of the Trika is quite different from the one which the Nyāya school propounds. The Nyāya school thinks that power is a quality, and so there has to be a substratum which possesses the attribute of power. What it amounts to saying is that, apart from the substratum, there is no possibility for a quality to exist. The existence of an attribute, thus, is dependent upon the substratum. It means that the substratum in quite different from the attribute it possesses. Likewise it would mean that the knower is quite different from the power of knowledge on account of the fact that the latter is an attribute of the former. This line of thinking of the Nyāya concerning the substance and attribute is rejected outright by the Trika school. For the Trika attribute is, as it were, the very being of the substance, which means that the power of knowledge constitutes the very essence of the substance. The distinction that may seem to exist between the substance and the attribute is an imaginary one. This distinction between the substance and the attribute, which is basically an imaginary one, is of the same nature which exists between the parts and the whole. A chair, for example, consists of many parts. Each part, like arm, leg, etc., is given a separate name, thereby denoting their respective functions. When all the parts are taken together, we have the chair. If the parts are taken apart, there will be no chair. It is the collocation of various items that constitute a chair. Upon the formation of the chair, there disappears the distinction that may have existed prior to the emergence of the chair. Upon the emergence of the chair, parts merge into the totality called chair. In applying this analogy to the Universal Consciousness and its powers, the Trika school arrives at the conclusion that there is no difference between the two.[47] Insofar as the various powers of the Absolute are concerned, they have not to be seen as if one power is different from another. They have simply to be seen as aspects of the Absolute. These powers, in the language of the Trika, are the *vimarśa* or the *svātantrya-śakti* of the Absolute.

Since the Absolute of the Trika is of the nature of consciousness, so it would mean that self-awareness (*vimarśa*) is as innate to it as illumination is to natural light. To be self-conscious or aware of oneself means that there has to be an "I" who is aware of itself. In the context of the Absolute it means that the Absolute has to be an "I", and it is only in terms of an "I" that the Absolute can be aware of itself. It is for this reason that the Trika has conceived the Absolute as an I-consciousness. This "I", however, is not an equivalent to the empirical ego. It is an "I" which is of cosmic nature, and accordingly is spoken of as being complete (*paripūrṇa*) in itself. By describing the Absolute in terms of a conscious Ego, the Trika thereby views the Absolute as a Person. Śiva, thus, is an absolute Person.[48]

It must be by now crystal clear that the Trika conception of the Absolute differs radically from the one which the Advaita Vedānta school of Śaṁkara upholds. For the latter the absolute *brahman* is a static, passive and motionless mass of consciousness, whereas the absolute Śiva of the former is a self-conscious Person endowed with will, knowledge and action. Śiva as Transcendent represents passivity, whereas Śakti is the power whereby the Absolute gains the momentum of dynamism.[49] Śakti is not separate from Śiva, but is innate to it. It is, therefore, erroneous to assume or to maintain that Śakti is possessed by Śiva, which means that Śiva is not the possessor of Śakti. Rather Śakti is the innate nature of Śiva, which means that the nature of Śiva is defined in terms of its dynamism. At the iconographical level Śiva as being both consciousness and power, luminosity and reflection, is concretized by the symbol of *Ardhanārīśvara,* half male and half female. The maleness and femaleness of the Absolute plays an important role in Tantrism. We think of the Absolute as the combination of male and female principles insofar as conceptual thinking is concerned. At the transcendent level the Absolute is neither male nor female on account it being beyond the categories or pairs of thought. This symbolism of male and female has to be seen as a unity, and in terms of which the nature of the Absolute is delineated as being consciousness and activity.

In may be asked as to what do we mean by the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*) with regard to the Absolute? The power of action of the Absolute denotes that power whereby the manifestable is made manifest, and is identical with the *svātantrya-śakti* (absolute power) of the Absolute.[50] As the power of action is identical with the absolute power of freedom of the Absolute, so the power of knoweldge is said to be simply an aspect of it.

If action (*kriyā*) is the nature of Śiva, does it mean that we are binding Śiva to a sequential order of action which occurs in time. We know that action occurs sequentially in time, and apart from time there is no possiblity for action to occur. The sequential order (*krama*) of action means that one action follows another in time[51] (*kāla*). It is the contention of the Trika school that the sequential order, insofar as action is concerned, can be applied only to that form of action which is ordinary or worldly (*laukika-kriyā*), and not to that form of action which pertains to the Transcendent. As the Absolute is beyond time, so the ordinary norms concerning action are inapplicable to Śiva. The Absolute, on account of being transcendent to time and space, is not subject to the sequential order of action. Whatever actions issue forth from the Absolute, they are of non-sequential order (*akrama*), and so the actions of Śiva are termed as being sequenceless. "As sequence is not possible in the Lord (Śiva), so sequence is not possible in his actions either."[52]

Śakti, which is the essential nature of Śiva, expresses itself through five functions. These five functions correspond to the four hierarchical manifestations of the Word (*vāc*), which are the Transcendent (*parā*), the Visionary (*paśyanti*), the Middle (*madhyamā*), and the Gross (*vaikharī*). The Transcendent and the Visionary stages of the Word represent perfect unity, whereas the Middle denotes the stage of unity-in-diversity (*bhedābheda*), and the Gross embodies complete diversity (*bheda*). The five functional powers that are associated with the four stages of manifestation of the Word are consciousness (*cit*), bliss (*ānanda*), will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). The first two functions—consciousness and bliss—correspond to the Transcendent stage of pure unity, and so is not at all considered to be a manifestational stage. As this is the stage of unity, so consciousness and bliss are equated with Śiva and Śakti. Also at this stage of pure creation no manifestational activity takes place. Accordingly this state or stage has been termed as that of pure "I" (*ahaṁ*), and not of *I am this* (*ahaṁ-idaṁ*). Insofar as the other three functional powers of the Absolute are concerned, they are seen to be related to the manifestational process of creation. These powers are will, knowledge and action, and they emerge or become operative when the process of impure creation begins.

As consciousness is said to be dynamic, so this dynamism, at the level of pure unity, denotes illumination (*prakāśa*) and awareness (*vimarśa*). The awareness of the stage of unity is not a knowledge which is determinate or a knowledge which is of specific objects.[53] Whenever *cit-śakti* of the Absolute is referred to, it denotes a self-awareness which is neither determinate nor specific. Likewise when *ānanda-śakti* is spoken of, it denotes the joy or bliss that is innate to Śiva. For the Trika bliss denotes that absolute joy which surges up on account of the absolute freedom (*svātantrya*). As the Absolute overflows with joy, so it is said to be identical with freedom. The outward flow of this joy finds its proper expression in the cosmic dance of Śiva, or what is called Naṭarāja, the King of Dance. When it comes to the question of three powers of will-knowledge-action, we are told that they express the process of manifestational creation. The power of will (*icchā-śakti*) begins to operate as and when Śiva desires to manifest itself in the form of the objective universe. This desire to manifest is seen as the first wonder (*camatkāra*) of the creational process.[54] Upon the emergence of desire the next step that is taken for the actualization of the process of manifestation is that of ideation (*jñāna*). This manifestational stage is spoken of as that of ideation because what the form of creation should be, remains as an idea in the mind of Śiva.[55] Finally comes into operation the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*), and it begins to function the moment both desire and ideation concerning manifestation are actualized. Upon their actualization, Śiva thereby projects the world as appearance (*ābhāsa*). This projection of the world involves action, and so accordingly is termed as *kriyā*.[56]

The actualization of that which is manifest must not be seen as a logical necessity within Śiva; rather it is the free overflowing (*uccalana*) of the ecstatic bliss which terminates in the actualization of manifestation. As the creative fluid or semen flows forth when the sexual bliss gains intensity, likewise is emission of creation to be treated. The emission of the universe, at the anthropomorphic level, is to be viewed as the outcome of the union of the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti. The entire cosmic manifestation and resoption is the playful sport (*līlā*) of the Lord—and that which is playful, is always spontaneous and automatic. Thus the five cosmic activities of creation, preservation, resorption, concealment and revelation constitute the essential nature of the Absolute of Trika.

REFERENCES

1. Moti Lal Pandit, *Beyond the Word* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 149.
2. Moti Lal Pandit, *Śūnyatā: The Essence of Mahāyāna Spirituality* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 222ff.
3. See *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* of Gauḍapāda. ·
4. The theory of appearance (*ābhāsavāda*) tells us that all that is manifest, whether mental or physical, internal or external, sentient or insentient, belongs to the realm of manifestation. It is Paramaśiva as Absolute who, for all practical purposes, assumes the manifest condition. Whatever there

is in the manifest condition or realm is nothing but Paramaśiva, in an atomized state, itself.

5. *PTV*, 9.
6. Ibid., 19: *Na vidyate uttaram praśnaprativacorūpaṁ yatra.*
7. *TĀ*, 2.24.
8. *PTV*, 9.
9. *ĪPV*, 1.1.2.
10. Ibid.
11. *PTV*, 21: *Uttaraṁ ca śabdanam, tat sarvatha 'īdṛṣam tādṛṣam' iti vyavacchedaṁ kuryāt tad yatra no bhavati, avyavachinnam idam anuttaram.*
12. *ĪPK*, 1.2: *Kartari jñātari svātmanyyādhisiddhe maheśvare/*
    Ajaḍātmā niṣeddhaṁ vā siddhiṁ vā vidadhīta kaḥ//
13. *PS*, 5: *Śiva eva gṛhītapaśubhāvaḥ.*
14. *TĀ*, 1.104.
15. Ibid., 1.60: *Anāpekṣasya vaśino. . . .*
16. *ĪPV*, 1.198: *Atha anyenāpi satā ghaṭena, yatovabhāsasya pratibimbarūpā chāyā dattā, tām asau avabhāso bibhrad ghaṭasya prakāśa ityucyate, tataśca ajaḍaḥ, tarhi sphaṭikasalilamukurādiḥ api evambhīa eva iti ajaḍaḥ syāt. Atha tathābhutam api ātmānaṁ tam ca ghaṭādikaṁ sphaṭikadiḥ na parāmṛṣṭuṁ samarthaḥ iti jaḍaḥ, tathā paramārśanam eva ajaḍyajīvitam antarvahiṣkaraṇasvātantryarūpam.*
17. *TĀ*, 2.3.4.
18. *PS*, 1.
19. *ĪPK*, 1.5.
20. *TĀ*, 1.107: *Eka evasya dharmosu sarvākṣepena vidyate/*
    Tena svātantryasaktyaiva yukta ityanjaso vidhiḥ//
21. *TĀ*, 1.52.
22. Ibid., 1.54, 59-60.
23. Ibid., 2.16.
24. Ibid., 2.30.
25. *MVV*, 1.
26. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 5.105-9.
27. *TĀ*, 3.2: *Yaḥ prakāśaḥ sa sarvasya prakāśtvaṁ prayacchati/*
28. *Sp.Kā.*, 6.
29. *MVV*, 1.62b-64.
30. *PTV*, p. 134.
31. *MM*, p. 133.
32. *TĀ*, 4.171-72; *IP*, 2.1.8.
33. *TĀ*, 3.120-21.
34. Ibid.
35. *MM*, p. 30; *TĀ*, 2.9.
36. *T.Sā.*, p. 12.
37. *MVV*, 1.625-26a.

38. *MM*, 12.
39. *ĪPV*, 1.202.
40. Ibid.
41. *TĀ*, 15.265-66: *Mahāprakāśarūpa he yeyaṁ saṁvidvijṛmbhate/*
    Sa śivaḥ śivataivāsya vaiśivarūpyāvabhāsitā//
42. Ibid., 1.79.
43. *ĪPV*, 1.8.11.
44. *TĀ*, 10.17: *Svātantryamātrasadbhāvā yā tvicchā śaktiraiśvarī/*
    Śivasya śaiva karaṇaṁ tayā vetti karoti ca//
45. Ibid., 9.14.
46. *TĀV*, 1.55: *Prakāśasyātmaviśrāntirahaṁbhāvo hi kīrtitaḥ.*
47. *TĀ*, 1.109.
48. Ibid., 3.235.
49. *ĪPV*, 1.31-32: *Sa cāyaṁ svatantraḥ . . . tadevāsya pārameśvaryam mukhyamānandamayaṁ rūpaṁ iti pūrvamupāttaṁ 'kartari' iti. Tadeva svātantryaṁ vibhajya vaktuṁ 'jñātari' iti paścānnirdiṣṭam.*
50. *ĪPV*, 1.8.1; *TĀ*, 3.1.
51. Ibid., 2.1.3: *Krama eva ca kālo, na anyo'sau kaścit . . . bhinneti kāla eva kramaḥ, krama eva kalaḥ.*
52. *ĪPV*, 2.1.2.
53. *T.Sā.*, 1: *Prakāśatrūpata cicchaktiḥ.*
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.: *Sarvākārayogitvaṁ kriyāśaktiḥ.*

CHAPTER 6

Cosmic Manifestation

The Trika theory of creation has its source in, and is based upon, a philosophic conception which upholds that whatever is manifest, or appears to be manifest, is nothing but the extension of the Absolute itself. This view accordingly has been termed as that of manifestational appearance (*ābhāsavāda*). It is upon grasping the inner core or essence of this doctrine that we shall be able to comprehend as to what the Trika means when the term creation is used in the context of that which is manifest.

THE THEORY OF APPEARANCE

The theory of appearance is the fundamental doctrine of the Trika Śaivism concerning the cosmic manifestation. The theory expounds a view which says that the world is not an *ex nihilo* creation of God. Also it is maintained that the world is not fashioned by God from some pre-existent stuff. So the analogy of the potter and the pot is not applicable to it. A potter, while making a pot, makes the pot from an existent stuff. The potter may, thus, be seen as an instrumental cause of the pot, and not its material cause. For the Trika Śaivite the world is a projection of the Absolute, who is of the nature of consciousness. The world as projection of absolute Śiva denotes that the world is not to be treated merely as a meterial reality, but a reality which is *in* consciousness. The appearance of the Absolute as cosmos is explained in terms of the image in a mirror. The world or the cosmos is like the reflected image in a mirror, which means that the cosmos is not different from the reflected image. In other words, cosmos is nothing else but the reflection of the Absolute itself. What it means is this: The cosmos, which is a reflected image, is nothing else but the appearance or manifestation (*ābhāsa*) or reflection (*pratibimba*) of the Absolute. In short, it is the Absolute itself who is reflected as the world.

It is upon the theory of reflection upon which the Trika establishes its nondualism. The theory of reflection tells us that there exists both non-difference and difference between the reflection and that which is reflected. The unity between the two exists to the extent the reflection is treated as not being substantially different from the reflected. Since the reflection is substantially identical with the reflected, it means that both are one or identical essentially. With regard to the manifest world it means that the world as reflection of the Absolute is substantially identical with the latter. So Śiva and the cosmos are seen to be one, because the latter is the reflection of the former. There also exists difference between the reflection and the reflected, which means that the world we live in is different from Śiva. The world as reflection differs from Śiva in that the former as reflection is not essentially the same ontically as is the latter. From this it follows that the reflection is both real and unreal. It is real to the extent it is seen essentially to be identical with the reflected, which is Śiva. Insofar as reflection is *not* what it appears to be, it is unreal. As the reflection of the face in a mirror is not actually made up of flesh and bones, but is just a reflection of the reflected, so the appearance of the face in the mirror cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be treated as real. The ontic status of such a face can be said to be only unreal. It is the face (*bimba*) which actually is real and not its reflection (*pratibimba*). The reflection of the face is just an appearance (*ābhāsa*). The reflected face has to be treated as real to the extent it appears to be so. Moreover, the reflected image is to be considered as real to the extent it is not an imagined one, which means that reflection is perceived outside and is not simply conceived in the mind.[1]

In order to grasp the actual significance of appearance (*ābhāsa*), we will have to take into consideration the most important term that the Trika makes us of, which is that of *vimarśa.* The term *vimarśa* signifies that form of reflection or thinking which occurs within the mind, or, should we say, *vimarśa* is a thinking which is of the nature of interior, and so does not get reflected outside of the mind. The term *ābhāsa,* however, is a reflection which is reflected outside the mind, and so is accordingly translated as appearnace. The term *ābhāsa* is equivalent to the reflection of the face in a mirror. It means that whatever idea one may conceive in the mind, it gets reflected outside the mind, which means that it is externalized. It is the externalization of an idea which is meant by appearance or manifestation (*ābhāsa*). *Vimarśa,* in contrast to *ābhāsa,* is pure thinking in the mind. In the case of *ābhāsa,* thinking gets reflected outside the mind. When, for example, one remembers someone, it is *vimarśa* because thought remains within the confines of the mind. When one sees, for example, a reflection in a mirror, it is *ābhāsa*. This interpretation of *ābhāsa,* in comparison to the term *vimarśa,* tells us that which appears is of objective nature, but not necessarily of material nature. The appearance of a reflection is said to be objective because it (i) exists as a reflection and (ii) also can be perceived or cognized.

REALISM–IDEALISM DEBATE

If the world, according the Trika, is a reflection of appearance (*ābhāsa*) of Śiva, then the question may naturally be asked as to what is the actual ontological status of the world. Is the world that we perceive or cognize ontically real or unreal? The Trika Śaivism asserts that the world is a projected appearance of the all-inclusive Consciousness, which is but Paramaśiva. This is how Abhinavagupta explains as to how the process of appearance occurs:

> Just as earth, water, etc., are reflected in a clean mirror without being mixed, so also the entire world of objects appears together in the one Lord Consciousness.[2]

It is legitimate to ask in this context as to how it can be proved logically that the world of objects is really the appearance of Śiva? Is it possible to prove reasonably that the world is an appearance like a reflection in a mirror, or like the reflected moon in a clean pool of water? As the real taste of pudding is in its eating, so the theory of appearance depends for its affirmation upon the proper epistemological examination. To say that the world is a projection of the Universal Consciousness is to adhere to the school of idealism which reduces everything to mental activity. In contrast to idealism, we have realism, which says that the objects we perceive outside exist actually in their own right. Whether we perceive the object or not, it exists independently of our perception, and so does not need the perceiver's affirmation for its existence. This means that the object exists prior to its knowing—and this is possible only if the materiality of the object is accepted as being independent of mind.

As the Trika school, more or less, is idealistic in orientation, so axiomatically it rejects the contention of the realists that objects exist independently of consciousness. It asserts that the very existence of the objects depends upon our seeing them. It is exactly the standpoint of Berkeley. Accordingly said Berkeley: *esse est percipi.* This axiom of

Berkeley is equivalent to saying that the objects in a dream come into existence only when they are perceived, and so according to this theory, it is knowledge which is prior to the object of cognition. What it means is this: The object really comes into existence upon its cognition. The object, thus, depends for its existence upon being perceived. In other words, it means that it is knowledge which bestows existence upon the object. In this manner the existence of an object is reduced to mental activity, which means that the object is not to be considered as being "actual", but only as an "ideal". When this viewpoint is further analyzed, we realize that idealism thinks of consciousness as being the sole real, whereas that which is objective or outside of consciousness is termed as being the projection of consciousness. In short, it means that nothing exists apart from consciousness.[3]

The philosophical standpoint of the realists is quite contrary to that which idealism upholds. For a realist the world is real because it appears to be so. The realist is also a pragmatist, and, on pragmatic considerations, he thinks of the world as being actual and real. It is the causal efficiency (*artha-kriyā-kāritvā*) which is seen to be the real test with regard to the actualness of an object. A chair, for example, is real to the extent it functions as a chair. It is the functionality of a thing which is responsible in determining its reality or unreality. If it is the causal efficiency which determines the reality of a thing, then the question arises as to whether the dream-objects should be treated as real or unreal? The dream-objects, upon waking from sleep, are negated, and so are considered to be illusory or unreal. The objects of dream, however, prove to be efficient during the period of dream. Is the efficiency of the objects of dream to be taken as a norm for their reality? Not at all! Why? Because they disappear as soon as one comes out from the dream, which means the objects of dream have no reality. Similar is the case with objects of illusion, which appear even when one is awake. Take the case of snake and rope. On account of illusion, the rope, because of dim light or darkness, is taken to be a snake. The snake, however, disappears immediately once sufficient light appears. The snake, during the period of illusion, is casually as efficient as is the actual snake. The person experiences the same amount of terror which he has upon seeing an actual snake. The argument of causal effeciency, thus, does not prove at all as to whether an object is real or unreal.

For the Trika it is knowledge which determines the actualness of an object, or what technically is called the *sāpekṣa-jñāna,* or the knowledge upon which an object is dependent. What it means is this: When the mind knows or cognizes an object, this knowing or cognizing is called knowledge. It amounts to asserting that an object is known to us the moment it appears or is revealed. It is not the object by itself which is responsible in revealing itself, and thereby determining its reality. It is the light of consciousness which enables or empowers the object to reveal itself. If the matter is translated in Kantian terms, it means that it is the appearance of the object that really is cognized, and not the object in itself. The Vijñānavādin Buddhists interpreted this standpoint as to mean that a thing comes into existence (*upalambha*) upon the arising of knowledge. As a form of idealism it tells us that the existence of an object is directly dependent upon knowing it, which means that, apart from knowledge, there is no possibility for the object to exist. For the Trika, moreover, it means that we never know an object as it is in itself. We know the object as it appears to our consciousness.

The World as Reflection

What does this standpoint of the Trika concerning the validity of an object tell us with regard to the status of the world? For the Trika idealists it denotes that our knowledge of the world arises in the form of reflection (*pratibimba*). It means that the world as it is nothing else but the self-reflection of the Absolute. In what way can we really assert that the world is a reflection of the Absolute? The world as reflection is based upon the understanding concerning the cognition of an external object. The external object, according to the Trika, is known only when it enters the mind in the form of an idea. It amounts to saying that the objects do not enter the mind as material entities. It is not, for example, the physical table which is apprehended by the mind. Rather it is the appearance or reflection of the table that makes its entrance into the mind. What the mind, thus, grasps is not the thing-in-itself, but the reflection of the object. How is it possible, it maybe asked, to know the object without it entering the mind? To this question the answer that is given by the Trika is as follows. It is possible to know the object without its physical presence in the mind. In dream we cognize objects without their actual presence. Moreover, the mind, being creative in nature, has the power of giving rise to reflection within itself even when the object is absent.[4] The Trika thesis is the same which John Locke advocated. According to Locke, the physical objects do not enter the mind. If this be the case, then it is not possible to know the things that are constitutive of the world as they are in themselves. What the mind really knows are "ideas"

—and by ideas Locke does not mean concepts in the mind. He means by ideas what appears to the senses. This line of thought tells us that the mind receives that which is mental in nature like ideas, images, reflection, etc. This viewpoint ultimately terminates in a kind of idealism which explains that the mind only apprehends ideas and not material entities.

Since the world is seen as an appearance, so the question arises: What is the ontological status of the world? The Trika maintains that there is only one reality, and that reality it calls Consciousness (*saṁvid, citi*). In religious terms this consciousness is termed as Paramaśiva, or the Supreme Lord. As consciousness alone is said to be real, so it means that which is of material nature, or has materiality as its form, is not real. It is the Supreme Consciousness, Paramaśiva, which appears as the world of matter.[5] Insofar as the material world is concerned, it is thought to be a projection or construction of the Supreme Consciousness or Mind. This projection of Surpeme Consciousness is viewed to be similar to the reflection in a mirror, or of moon in a clean pool of water. How and in what manner does consciousness project the world out of itself? Consciousness does it, so we are told, by itself and within itself without resorting to any external help. The self-reflection of consciousness and reflection in a mirror have not to be treated as if they are similar or identical. The difference between the two is startling, and consists of in the following: The reflection that is reflected in the mirror is different from the mirror itself, which means that the mirror and the reflection in it are not identical. This is not, however, the case with consciousness. Consciousness is both the reflected object and the mirror in which reflection has been reflected, which, in other words, means that nothing exists apart from or outside of consciousness. It is consciousness which is seen by the Trika as the substratum of the reflected. The world as reflection or the reflected has its basis in the Supreme Consciousness, or Paramaśiva.[6]

THE STATUS OF THE WORLD

It is now clear that for the Trika the Supreme Consciousness alone is real, and apart from it nothing exists. In viewing consciousness as the sole reality Trika thereby expresses the fundamental idealist conception that the world, or whatever is outside of consciousness, must not be treated as a kind of solid material block existing independently of consciousness. As such the world has to be seen as existing *in* and *within* consciousness, which amounts to saying that both are identical. Why should not the world be treated as different from consciousness, or existing independently of it? Because the world is said to be the construction or projection of consciousness. Moreover, it is *a priori* assumed by the idealists that a mental projection is identical with consciousness because the former is said to be made up of the stuff of the latter.[7] The identity between the two is explained in terms of dream analogy. In a dream it is the mind which projects or constructs by itself and within itself the entire dream world. When applied to the world it denotes that the objective world similarly is the construction of the mind. Since the world is the projection of the mind, so it, the world, is not different from the mind itself. As consciousness in a dream transforms itself into a dreamer as well as into that which is dreamt, so the empirical world, of which we are a part, is seen to be a dream on a large scale. It is a dream that is enacted by Paramaśiva. In this manner is established the status of the world as being a reflection or appearance of the Supreme Consciousness.

Are we doing justice to the world when we link its appearance to the appearance of objects in a dream? Do not the dream objects disappear from the mind the moment we come out from the dream? The world, however, does not disappear like the dream objects. It persists. The world continues to exist even when we are in deep sleep, or when the dreamer exists no more. It is true that the world is not experienced in deep sleep. But we never experience the dream objects again upon their disappearance. Further, if it is granted that the world is like a dream, then each dreamer would have a different dream of the world, which means that there would be a multiplicity of worlds. In actuality we never experience in our waking state various worlds. We always experience the same and identical world. The answer of the Trika concerning the above objection is this: The world, although like a dream, is not a dream that is dreamt by every individual mind. It is a dream of Paramaśiva. As the world is the dream of one and the same Śiva-mind, so accordingly each individual being dreams the same and indentical world, and not different worlds. The world persists even upon the passing away of an individual because it, the world, is given rise by the cosmic mind of Paramaśiva, and not by the individual minds, who are limited and finite. The world, however, disappears as and when Śiva withdraws the process of manifestation of that which is manifestable. This process of disappearance of the world denotes the reversion of all the manifestables to their primal or unmanifest state. Also this reversion of the world is linked to the closing (*nimeṣa*) of the eyelids of Śiva. In yogic terms it denotes the total introversion of consciousness (*nimīlana-samādhi*). A yogī who has reached this state experiences inwardly the total disappearance of the world. In contrast to withdrawal, we have the process of manifestation or appearance, and this process is linked to the opening of the eyelids (*unmeṣa*) of Śiva. A yogī who is able to remain in the state of *samādhi* even while awake, experiences within the entire play of manifestation. Technically this state of ecstasy is called the *unmīlana-samādhi.*

The world as appearance is projected, freely and spontaneously, by Śiva. It is not a determinate projection in the sense that Śiva is compelled by some force to project the world out of itself. Had the projection of the world occurred on account of some necessity, then Śiva could not be termed as being absolutely free in his activity concerning the emergence of the world. Also it must be kept in mind that the world does not exist as a potentiality *in* Śiva. Had it been so, then Śiva would have, even against his will, to give rise to the world. Let us illustrate this point with the help of an example of tree and seed. A tree, for example, exists potentially in the seed. The seed, once it is sown in the earth, has to give birth to the seedling, which ultimately becomes a tree. This is a determinate creation. Since Śiva is free to give or not to give rise to the world, so determinate necessity cannot be applied to Śiva. The manifestation of the world is a free act of Śiva.

As the world is treated as an appearance of Śiva by the Trika, so it cannot be said to be ontically real or self-existent. The world, thus, has only an epistemic significance. The world, from an ontological viewpoint, is as much an illusion (*bhrama*)[8] as is a dream, which means that it is unreal (*niḥsatya*),[9] false (*mithyā*).[10] This is what Abhinavagupta has to say concerning the nature of the world:

> The world does not really exist. What is then the question of the bondage of the person? . . . This is illusion like the rope-snake or the shadow-ghost caused by false attachment.[11]

What it means is this: The world exists to the extent it is known to us or is cognized by us. In philosophical terms it means that the world exists in knowledge and not apart from it. The world, however, is real when considered as an appearance, which means that it has not to be taken as existing apart from consciousness or existing substantially, but existing as a projection of consciousness. It is as projection that the world is said to be real, which means that it is not as unreal as the Vedāntins would have us believe. The world is not, therefore, as unreal as are the horns of a hare. The world however, is not real absolutely. Whatever reality it has or possesses, it is that of a reflection. As the world is the projection of Supreme Consciousness, so it is not to be thought of as being superimposed upon the Absolute. The Advaita Vedāntins think of the world as being a superimposition upon *brahman.* If this contention of the Vedāntins is accepted, then the world would be an independent reality, which would denote that it would be existing apart from *brahman.* The result would be a dualism in which two independent entities would be existing side by side. Since Vedānta opposes dualism, it would have to find some other argument concerning the actual status of the world. For the Trika any kind of dualism denotes bondage. The only way, so think the Trikites, of maintaining the non-duality of the Absolute is to look at the world as a self-projection of the Supreme Consciousness.

The world as appearance is real in the sense of it having an epistemic validity. Although the world may be an appearance, yet it is aesthetically enjoyed by the perceiver (*pramātā*). The aesthetic delight which the perceiver derives from the world is on account of the fact that the former has an aesthetic identification (*sādhāraṇī-karaṇa*) with the latter. The experience of aesthetic delight may be explained by resorting to the analogy of a play. When we watch a play in the theatre, we know that the events that are being played are fictitious. Even upon knowing the fictitious nature of events, we delight in the acting of the actors on the stage. Likewise we have the experience of aesthetic delight of the world on account of our identification with it, while knowing that the world is apparent. The aesthetic joy of the world is not fictitious at all. It is a real joy, and we accordingly enjoy it to the fullest. Even though the ontic character of the world may be that of a reflection, yet it is axiologically as well as aesthetically real. Insofar as the Advaita Vedāntins and the Mādhyamika Buddhists are concerned, they think of the world to be so false as to be completely destitute of any value or significance. The falsity of the world is of such a degree that it has no value (*tuccha*). The Trika Śaivites, however, reject this deconstructionistic view of the Vedāntins and of Mādhyamikas concerning the status of the world. The Trika looks at the world as being a play (*krīḍā, līlā*) of the Lord, and so the ecstatic and blissful dance of Naṭarāja may be seen as the outpouring of inner joy. This inner joy may be linked to the aesthetic delight. The idea of sport or play also denotes the free and spontaneous activity of the Lord. In the context of creation, it means that the world is a free and spontaneous self-expression of Śiva.

The Absolute as Freedom

For the Trika the Absolute is identical with freedom. In the context of creation of the world it means that the manifestation of creation is a free self-expression of the Lord. For the Trika freedom constitutes the very essence of the Lord. As it is the nature of knowledge to reveal or illumine, so it is the nature of consciousness to be absolutely free.[12] Matter, in contrast to consciousness, is insentient, and so has no notion as to what freedom means or denotes.

A priori assertion of the Trikites concerning consciousness as being absolutely free raises a host of questions, and one of them would be: Why consciousness, in its empirical mode, experiences the bondage of limitation and finitude? The answer to this question that is given by the Trika is more theological than philosophical in substance. It is said that the consciousness of an individual being, which essentially is identical with the Supreme Consciousness, experiences the limitation of freedom on account of various defilements (*malas*). The defilements function as veils of concealment, and so give rise to obstructions. These obstructions impede the freedom of an individual. It is not only the exercise of freedom that is curtailed by the defilements, but also knowledge. While in deep sleep, the individual being is never aware either of himself or about things about him. It is because of defilements. The defilements as the concealing agents are linked to the clouds that veil the light of the sun, thereby causing darkness to be. The veils, however, have no power of negating the essential nature of consciousness, which is that of freedom and of knowledge. As upon the removal of clouds the light of the sun becomes visible, so upon the destruction of defilements individual consciousness experiences the unlimited freedom. The experience of freedom consciousness has in proportion to the elimination of defilements. When an individual, through deep meditative introversion, is able to remove the last shreds of impurities, he thereby reaches, so we are told, the ultimate state of Śiva in which absolute freedom is actualized.

The individual being, even though he may be limited and bound, never experiences the absence of freedom or of knowedge. It is true that whatever freedom he enjoys, it is of limited measure and extant.[13] As mini-Śiva, or Śiva in an atomized form, the individual being, although in a limited manner, makes use of all the five power of Śiva. It denotes that the individual being, even though existing in an atomic condition, is not destitute of powers of freedom, knowledge, action, and so on.

Freedom is realized to the extent the individual looks at himself as being consciousness. Freedom, within the Trika framework, is conceived of in dynamic terms, and it is on account of the dynamic nature of freedom that Paramaśiva as consciousness projects the world of appearance. The content of freedom, thus, is characterized by activity (*kriyā*). It means that freedom is realized to the extent consciousness frees itself from the framework of limitations. Freedom is realized the moment consciousness acts freely. It is action which realy tells us as to what freedom is. Moreover, freedom is characterized by choice, and where choice is absent, there freedom exists not.[14] An action is really said to be free which is motiveless, that is to say, a free action is that which has nothing to achieve. A motiveless action is performed not because one has to realize or achieve that which one may be lacking, but because it issues forth spontaneously from the core of inner being. A person who has reached the state of complete motivelessness, is said to be perfect on account of him being full. That which is full lacks nothing. It is the action of such a person which is said to be characterized by freedom. Such a type of action, that is, motiveless action, is totally free from the causal effects, and thereby free from the causal fruits. In the context of *karman* doctrine it denotes that an action that is motiveless does not bear fruit in terms of future rebirth. It is the realized yogī whose actions are of this nature, because they are neither conditioned nor determined by anything. As it is the nature of water to flow forth freely in a stream, or of wind to move freely in space, so it is the nature of actions of a realized yogī to be motiveless and spontaneous. This is what Kṛṣṇa has to say concerning the motiveless action: "I have on earth nothing to do or accomplish (because I am always full), yet I go on performing actions."[15]

COMPLETE AND INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE

The world of objects may be a free self-expression of Śiva, and therefore a mere appearance, yet the fact remains that the bound soul or individual thinks of this apparent world as being real and not an appearance. For the bound individual (*paśu*) the world is not a reflection (*pratibimba*) or an appearance (*ābhāsa*) of Śiva. For him the world of matter is substantial and, therefore, real, which means that it exists in its own right and independently of, and apart from, Śiva. Further it means that the existence of the world is not dependent upon the cognition of the subject. The question that arises in this context is this: Why is it that the individual takes the apparent as real? The explanation given is that the mind of an individual, on account of ignorance (*avidyā*), is given to such cognitions that happen to be illusory—and unfortunately these illusory cognitions he takes to be real.

To give a convincing explanation concerning the nature of illusion (*māyā*), the Advaita Vedāntins as well as the Mādhyamika Buddhists speak of truth as being of two types: conventional (*vyāvahārika, saṁvṛti*) and the absolute (*paramārtha*).[16] The conventional truth or reality is that which is expressed or experienced in everyday life. It is valid to the extent it facilitates the affairs of life in the world. When compared to the absolute truth, it is totally false. The conventional truth has no significance in itself. Whatever significance it may possess, it is only a functional one. An individual being thinks of it being real to the extent he remains under the influence of ignorance. Ignorance persists to the extent one remains destitute of the knowledge of absolute truth. Upon the negation of ignorance, the absolute truth shines forth by itself, and so the individual knows that which, prior to the cognition of absolute truth, was taken to be real is false. Upon the negation of snake, we come to know that the snake is false, and it is rope that alone is real. On account of wrong perception we take rope to be a snake. Insofar as wrong perception persists, to that extent the illusory object is taken to be real. Upon the removal of illusion, which in our case means the negation of ignorance, we know the truth about the object of illusion.

The Trika accepts the above explanation or view concerning illusion, and terms it as being incomplete knowledge (*apūrṇakhyāti*). It is the view of the Trika that it is *māyā* alongwith the five limiting factors (*pañca-kañcukas*) which are responsible in giving rise to a type of knowledge that is illusory. Illusory knowledge is definitely a knowledge, but it is a knowledge which is incorrect and incomplete. It is on account of *māyā* that the five limiting factors veil the individual's vision. The limited individual being (*paśu*), therefore, thinks of the world to be absolutely real, which, in fact, it is not. The Trika does not make as sharp a distinction between the two levels of reality or truth—functional and absolute—as do the Vedāntins and the Mādhyamikas. Insofar as the objective world is seen as the expression of the Supreme Consciousness, to that extent the world is not unreal. It is unreal when the world is viewed apart from consciousness, or is seen to be existing independently of Śiva. The right knowledge concerning the world is said to be that which sees the world as being the projection of the Supreme Consciousness, and the wrong knowledge is that which looks at the world as being independent of Śiva. It is this positive view of the world which has engendered among the Trika thinkers an attitude towards the world which is aesthetically enjoyable and blissful.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

If the objective world that we inhabit is considered as being the self-expression of the Absolute, then why at all engage in activities that seem to have neither significance nor any value? This pertinent objection can be evaluated upon analyzing the various theories of creation which different schools of thought, from time to time, have given rise to.

Whatever cosmological theory a particular school of thought might have adumbrated, the theory has to be evaluated in the context of its ontological stance. It means that the cosmological views concerning the origin of the universe are directly dependent upon the conception one has of the Absolute. There are basically four theories of creation which the thinkers of different schools of thought have made use of in one way or the other. One of them maintains that the entire universe is composed of such elements which not only are subtle, but are eternal. These elements are said to be atoms (*aṇu*). It is God who is seen to be responsible in forming these elements into a creational pattern. This theory is spoken of as that of origination (*ārambhavāda*). The theory of origination concerning the origin of the cosmos is mainly followed by the schools of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

The other cosmological theory is known as that of transformation or modification (*pariṇāmavāda*), and is mainly followed by the Sāṁkhya-Yoga schools. According to this theory, it is the cause which transforms itself into the effect. In other words, the effect, prior to becoming an effect, exists potentially in the cause. It is like milk transforming itself into curd. Further the theory tells us that the various elements that compose the universe are nothing but the transformation of root-element (*mūla-prakṛti, pradhāna-tattva*). Prior to the transformation of the cause into the effect, there is perfect harmony among the three strands (*guṇas*). Once this harmony is disturbed, there occurs disequilibrium among these three strands, and consequently the root-element transforms itself into the multiplicity of elements that are constitutive of the universe. The three strands are the good (*sattva*), passionate (*rajas*), and the dark (*tamas*). As and when disequilibrium occurs among the three strands, which means the dominance of one strand over the other two, there ensues thereby the creational process, which ultimately results in the evolution of the universe. The world, thus, is seen to be the evolute of *mūla-prakṛti.* The root-element is considered to be existing eternally, and the entitites that constitute the universe exist potentially within it like the plant in the seed. Creation, thus, is nothing but the actualization of the potentialities that exist in the root-element. At the time of creational dissolution, the elements, through reverse order, are reabsorbed as potentialites by the root-element. In this entire scheme no need of a creator-God is felt, a God who could at least be seen as the efficient cause of creation.

The Trika Śaivism agrees with the Sāṁkhya on many points. It accepts the Sāṁkhya categories of existence (*tattvas*) as being valid manifestational evolutes. The Trika, however, disagrees with the Sāṁkhya on the fundamental point of *mūla-prakṛti* and *puruṣa,* which the latter considers as being eternally self-existing existents. The Trika thinks of them as being the manifesation of the Supreme Lord, Śiva. It is the Lord who brings out the manifest universe out of *prakṛti,* and *prakṛti,* being inert (*jaḍa*), cannot do it at all by itself. The Trika, thus, thinks that there is no possibility of any creation to occur unless there is a causal agent who initiates the creational process, and this causal agent can be none other than the Lord itself.

There is an another theory of creation, which mainly is followed by the Advaitins, namely, the theory of appearance (*vivartavāda*). The theory actually tells us that the world does not exist at all ontically. It exists only epistemically, and that too illusorily. Since the world does not exist really, so it cannot be ascribed with an origin. It is logically an impossibility to maintain that which is non-existent has an origin. The world, however, is not non-existent in the sense of horns of a hare, or the son of a barren woman. The unreality of the world is equated with the objects of dream or of an illusion. Since the object of dream as well as of illusion has an origin, likewise should be ascribed an origin to the world. The Vedāntins, however, do not agree at all that the world has an origin, even though it may be an illusory one. It is a view which upholds the non-origination of the world. What we think to be an objective universe out there is, in fact, a chimera, a dream enacted by the beginningless ignorance. Within the Mahāyāna Buddhism this theory of non-origination of the world is upheld by those Buddhists who are known as the *śūnyavādins,* that is, upholders of the doctrine of Emptiness. The theory of non-origination has been rejected both by the Śaivites as well as by the Vaiṣṇuites on account of its bent towards nihilism.[17]

Insofar as the Paśupatas, the Śaivasiddhāntins and the Gorakhnāthīs are concerned, they have a theistic ontolgy, and so the creation of the world accordingly is ascribed to God. According to these schools of thought, it is Śiva who, out of compassion, brings about modification in *prakṛti,* and thereby facilitates the passage for the emergence of the world. God is, in some of these schools, seen only as an efficient cause. It is *prakṛti* which is considered to be the material cause. God as efficient cause fashions, like a potter, the universe out of the existent stuff called *prakṛti.* Some schools think of *prakṛti,* as do the Sāṁkhya, as being an independent entity, whereas others have identified it with the principle of Śakti, and so is seen as being identical with the power of God. God, while giving rise to the categories of existence, fashions the world in accordance with the principle of *karman,* and it is an interpretation which is deterministic, and so accordingly curtails the freedom of God. The ascription of this *karman*-determinism unto God is totally rejected by the Trika Śaivites of Kashmir.

TRIKA VIEW

The Trika Śaivites, in contrast to the above theories of creation, have their own specific theory of creation, which upholds the absolute freedom (*svātantrya*) of God. The absolute freedom of God means that God is totally free to give or not to give rise to creation. It is for this reason that the Trika school is also referred to as the school of freedom (*svātantryavāda*). What the theory says is this: God is absolutely free to create or not to create, and while manifesting himself as the universe, he does it out of total freedom without any external influence or internal compulsion. It is the absolute free will of God which is said to be responsible in causing the world to be. It means, in the language of the Trika, that it is the sportive nature of God to create, and so the manifestation of the universe must be seen as sport (*līlā*) of the Lord. As the sportive action is always spontaneous, so the manifestation of the world out of God must be seen as the natural flow of creative activity. This understanding of the Trika concerning the nature of God as being absolute freedom signifies that, while giving rise to the creational manifestation, he does not at all depend on anything other than himself. Each category of existence (*tattva*), as it were, exists within the Lord not as a potentiality, but as an unmanifest part of the Lord. The Lord vomits or emits the universe out of himself the moment creative urge for creation surges forth. This does not, however, mean that the world exists as a potentiality within the Lord, which is actualized when proper conditions are provided. Such an understanding, being deterministic, would destroy the freedom of the Lord. When it is said that the Lord vomits or emits out of himself the entire universe, what is meant is that he projects it out of himself without undergoing any modification, external or internal. The projection of the universe by the Lord is similar to the dream that we project in sleep. It is in this context that the world is said to be non-different from the Lord, as the former is but the projection of the Lord. There is total identity between that which is manifest and the Absolute. The difference between the two is experienced to the extent we remain under the influence of ignorance. There is complete macrocosmic and microcosmic fusion when the individual consciousness sinks or submerges into the all-inclusive Universal Consciousness. And this state of complete fusion or identity is called the state of transcendence (*anuttara*). What it means is this: That which is manifest exists, in the state of unity, as pure "I", which means that the "this" (*idaṁ*) is completely absent. Even in the state of perfect unity consciousness, however, never remains passive. There is always, in one form or the other, stir (*spandana*) within it—and it is due to this vibratory nature of consciousness that we speak of the Absolute as Śiva (that is, as God), Śakti (that is, as Godhead), and Sadāśiva (that is, as God when engaged in the sport of diversity), and so on.

THE CAUSAL THEORY

As the world, according to the Trika, is the self-extension (*prasāra*) of the absolute God, so it is considered to be substantially one with the latter.[18] This understanding of the world as being essentially one with the Absolute has its genesis in the causal theory which upholds that the cause (*kāraṇa*) and effect (*kārya*) are identical. It is a Sāṁkhyan theory basically which says that the effect, prior to its actualization, exists potentially in the cause. In relation to the creation of the world the theory tells us that the world is but an effect of the cause, and the cause is but Śiva itself. In simple terms it means that Śiva is the cause of the world, and the world is the effect.[19] Further the theory informs us that the world as effect is nothing but Śiva itself. Why? Because it is cause which transforms itself into effect, as is the case with milk when it transforms itself into the curd. From this it may be concluded that Śiva is not only an efficient cause, but also the material cause of the world. God is not simply an efficient cause like the potter. A potter, for example, makes the pot out of the existent clay and not out of himself. A potter, thus, is the instrumental cause of the pot, and not its material cause. It is clay which is the material cause of the pot. This is not the case with Śiva in relation to the creation of the world. Śiva does not give rise to the world out of some material that is external to him. Śiva as the material cause becomes the world as well as entities that are constitutive of it.

This causal theory concerning Śiva as being the material cause of the create raises its own problems. How can Śiva, who is said to be of the nature of pure consciousness, be the material cause of that which is of the nature of matter, or has materiality as its form? Matter, being inert (*jaḍa*), is of the nature which is contrary to the nature which consciousness represents or embodies. Even if it is assumed, for the sake of an argument, that consciousness transforms itself into matter, then that would mean that a different substance is given rise to, and so cannot be said to be identical with consciousness. It is a logical impossibility to maintain that the two contrary substances are identical. Moreover, it hurts reason to say that a substance can give rise to another which is contrary in nature. There must be an essential identity in nature between the cause and the effect if the latter is assumed to be non-different from the former. In the case of Śiva and the world we find no such identity, as both of them seem to be dissimilar in nature.

To avert such ticklish problems, the Trika says that the world is nothing but the self-projection of Śiva, who essentially is pure consciousness. As the world is the projection of the Supreme Consciousness, so it is seen to be but consciousness. The world, however, is not a real projection, but a projection that is ideal. The Trika, in contrast to the Advaita Vedānta, thinks of the world as an active projection of Śiva and not as a superimposition (*adhyāsa*) upon the Absolute. Since the world is taken to be the projection of consciousness, and so is said to be identical with consciousness, it means that Śiva as consciousness does not become *matter* when giving rise to the so-called material world. This is so because the substance of an ideal projection is but consciousness—and the world is but the ideal projection of consciousness. The Trika can, therefore, legitimately say that the apparent world is the projection of the Supreme Consciousness, and consciousness, while projecting the world, does not become a different substance, that is, matter.

There are two main broad views as to how the world of manifestation is caused. One view upholds that the process of manifestation is linear, whereas the other view thinks it to be cyclical. The Trika is of the view that the creational manifestation occurs cyclically. The essence of the cyclical view of creation lies in this: An originate necessarily has an end. The originate, upon its destruction, re-emerges again. It is in the context of this cyclical view of creation that the Trika speaks of three states of creation, which are origin (*sṛṣṭi*), preservation (*sthiti*), and dissolution (*saṁhṛti*). In addition to the three states, the Trika has postulated two more, namely, obscuration (*nigraha*) and grace (*anugraha*).[20] When Śiva, upon giving rise to the objective world, becomes a limited being (*paśu*), he thereby conceals his essential nature, which is that of consciousness-bliss (*cidānanda*). This emptying of himself of divinity is considered as the sport (*līlā*) of Śiva. In mystical terms it means that Śiva destroys or annihilates himself by incarnating himself as an ignorant and limited being. This concealment of the essential nature of Śiva terminates in what is called bondage (*pāśa*). The activity that is reverse to concealment is that of grace (*anugraha*). It is in and through grace that Śiva liberates the bound soul from the bondage of ignorance and of limitation by removing the impurities that cause obstruction on the way to liberation. Rightly has, therefore, Trika been spoken of as the religion of grace.[21] The five cosmic powers or functions of Śiva are creation, preservation, dissolution, concealment, and grace. These powers accordingly constitute the essential nature of the absolute Godhead.[22]

As to why God allows the world to emerge when it is destined to pass into oblivion upon its dissolution is a question that needs to be responded appropriately. The world that is finite and has an end seems to have no value or significance. If this be the case, then the world has no purpose or a goal. What purpose, moreover, does it serve to have a world which is finite and impermanent? These and such-like questions are bound to occur when search is made for meaning. The Trika has an answer concerning the dissolution of the world. The dissolution of the world is intended to give rest to such beings who might have become weary and tired due to repeated births and deaths. Likewise the world is given rise to so that weary souls may find an opportunity for working out their salvation by allowing the impurities to become sufficiently mature (*malaparipāka*). The creation of the world as well as its dissolution has a *telos,* which is to give rest, on the one hand, to such beings who, on account of repeated rebirths, are weary and, on the other, give them the opportunity, while in the world, to work out their salvation. The creation and dissolution of the world are equated to the day and night. As we work or engage in different activities during the day, likewise the individual is asked to work out his salvation while in the world. Having become tired on account of ceaseless activity during the day, the individual takes rest during the night so that he may begin his activities, upon the disappearance of the night, with a mind that is fresh and full of vigour. In a similar fashion not only the individual, but also the entire world takes rest when dissolution occurs. The dissolution of the world is linked to the closing of the eyelids (*nimeṣa*) of the yogī, and dentoes not only the deep introversion of consciousness, but also withdrawal of that which is manifest. When consciousness sinks into itself, there eventuates the experience of pure unity.[23] In relation to Śiva the dissolution of the universe or the closing of the eyelids signifies that he, during the period of dissolution, is not engaged in creational activities, but rests, in his own peace. In contrast to dissolution, we have the emergence of creation, which technically is called *unmeṣa,* and is linked to the opening of the eyes of a yogī. For a yogī *unmeṣa* denotes a state in which he has the experience as to how the consciousness projects world by externalizing itself. The term *nimeṣa* represents the interiorization of consciousness, and so dissolution of the universe, whereas *unmeṣa* denotes expansion of consciousness, and so represents the emergence of that which is manifest.[24]

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE WORD

There is a direct correspondence between the manifestation of the Supreme Word (*parāvāk*) and the objective manifestation of the universe. The Trika is of the view that Śakti, which is the innate vibratory power of the Lord, is identical with the Word, and the world out there is nothing but its manifest condition.[25] There are, so we are told, four hierarchically structured manifestational stages through which the Word descends and ultimately manifests itself as the create, and in terms of which the spoken speech is actualized. The four manifestational stages of the Word are the Transcendent (*parā*), the Visionary (*paśyanti*), the Middle (*madhyamā*), and the Gross (*vaikharī*). The first stage—the Transcendent—may not be considered as the stage of manifestational descent of the Word, for it is a stage that is characterized by the principle of pure unity. It is the state of the Absolute, and so in it the Self (*ahaṁ*) alone exists. As the state of pure unity, the Transcendent at this level accordingly suffers from no differentiation, which actually is the character of the manifest. In relation to the thirty-six manifestational cateogries of creation, the Transcendent state embodies pure unity of Śiva-Śakti. Whether we speak of this state as that of the Transcendent, or of Śiva-Śakti, or of Paramaśiva, it is one and the same. At this supreme level the Absolute, although the source of creation, is seen to be beyond the creational categories. The Self at this stage is conscious of itself without having any consciousness of the object, which means that the Self is conscious of itself not as an object (*ahaṁ-idaṁ*), but only as a pure subject. It amounts to saying that consciousness at this level does not go out of itself in search of objects, but remains absorbed within its own subjectivity. It is for this reason that this state is referred to as that of the pure Subject, and accordingly the absolute Ego is viewed as being non-relational.[26]

The absolute Word (*parāvāk, parā-śakti*) descends to the stage of the Visionary (*paśyanti*) when desire arises within it for the creational manifestation. The arising of desire within the Word is linked to the swelling (*ucchūṇatā*) of the seed, which denotes the first step for the coming into being of the plant. The seed, upon its swelling, develops an inclination (*unmukha*) towards manifesting itself as the plant. It is a state in which the actual manifestation does not take place. There is only an inclination or desire to become manifest. Among the five powers of Śiva that is dominant at this stage is that of will (*icchā-śakti*), and may be seen as the first step towards the actualization of three creational powers of Śiva, which are will-knowledge-action (*icchā-jñāna-kriyā*). When looked at from the point of the categories of existence, it represents the state of Sadāśiva—and Sadāśiva is seen as representing the desire for creational manifestation.[27]

As the Transcendent stage represents the pure unity of the Absolute, so the Visionary embodies the state of unity-in difference (*bhedābheda*), or what is technically called *ahaṁ-idaṁ* (I am this). What it means is this: At this stage the process of objectification begins implicitly, which ultimately results in the emergence of differentiation and distinction (*bheda*) of the phenomenal diversity. This stage is analogous to the liquid of peacock's egg. It is in the liquid of the egg, which, prior to its fertilization, represents complete unity, in which the multi-coloured plume of the peacock is potentially contained. The Visionary stage may, thus, be seen as representing the initial inclination towards objectification. At this stage no difference is pronounced between the word and its object. It is just in the making. Both the word (*vāca*) and the object (*vācya*) are in an undifferentiated state. Although the consciousness of the object (*idaṁ*) may have risen, yet it is not so pronounced as to result in the bifurcation between the "I" (*ahaṁ*) and the "this" (*idaṁ*).

The next stage, after the Visionary, is the Middle (*madhyamā*), and is lower and grosser than the above two. It is, however, subtler when compared to the *vaikharī,* or the Gross stage. Being in-between the Transcendent and the Visionary, on the one hand, and the Gross, on the other, this stage has, therefore, been called as that of the Middle. At this level of descent of the Word the creational process is more pronounced and direct. When the stage is seen from the perspective of five powers of Śiva (*pañca-śakti*), it represents the power of knowledg (*jñāna-śakti*). It means that the idea of the universe at this stage is in the proccess of being formed. Whatever creational activity at this stage may be taking shape, it is in the shape of idea.[28] The actualization of this idea into a physical reality, called the world, terminates at the Gross level. When looked at from the perspective of the categories of existence, it represents the category of Īśvara, which is equated with the power of knowledge. Accordingly it is said that the Middle stage encapsulates the consciousness of "this I am" (*idaṁ-ahaṁ*). While the consciousnes of difference has just begun at the Visionary stage, it takes much sharper turn at the level of the Middle.

Finally, we have the Gross stage (*vaikharī*). It is at this stage that the actualization of the world as an objective and material entity occurs. The Gross stage, thus, is seen as the most gross manifestation of the Word. When seen from the point of five powers of Śiva, it represents the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*), and is accordingly equated with the Sadvidyā category of existence. The manifestation of the Word as the objective world, according the Trika, does not denote its materiality. Rather the manifestation of the Word as the world is seen as an appearance (*ābhāsa*). What it means is this: The world as an object is emitted by the subject, and that means, within the Trika idealistic framework, that consciousness has externalized itself.[29] Accordingly has this stage been termed as the one which proclaims: "I am and this is" (*ahaṁ ca idaṁ ca*).

PURE AND IMPURE CREATION

So far we have shown as to how the manifestation of the Word as the spoken speech corresponds to the manifestation of the world. The number of categories of existence that constitute the entirety of the manifestation are said to be thirty-six. The first five manifestational categories are spoken of as being pure creation. Why? Because at these levels of existence there is no consciousness, explicit or implicit, of duality, which means that consciousness has not yet externalized itself. The first five categories of existence, therefore, represent what the Trika terms as pure creation. These categories are spoken of as being pure (*śuddha*) on account of them being free from the impurity (*mala*) of difference (*bheda*),[30] which means that there is no sense of bondage at these levels of existence. In contrast to pure creation, we have impure (*aśuddha*) creation. It is the sense of difference, and thereby of bondage, which is constitutive of impure creation. The five categories of existence (*tattvas*) that constitute the pure creation are Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśiva, Īśvara and Sadvidyā or Śuddhavidyā. Although there is projection, at the level of pure creation, of the "this", yet there is no division of consciousness into subject-object duality. Why? Because Śiva is aware that the "this" is his own projection and nothing more than that. As the projection of the "this" occurs through the sovereign will of Śiva, so no form of duality is experienced whatsoever by the beings of these categories. Consciousness takes the "this" as being other than itself only when it is tainted by the impurity of *māyā*. It is at the level of impure creation where *māyā* becomes operative, and so accordingly is given rise to duality and bondage. The one who, even in the face of the world, remains aware that "all this is my own glory" remains in the state of Śivahood.[31]

The pure creation, on account of it being free from the impure taints of *māyā,* is said to be of supersensuous nature, which means that the creational categories from Śiva to Sadvidyā do not suffer from the sense of duality, and thereby from the limitations of bondage. The beings of these categories of existence are said to be of the nature of consciousness, and so they are in no way or manner related to materiality, or to the mind, or to the vital breaths. The beings of these categories have been classified in accordance with the dominance of the five powers of Śiva, which are consciousness (*citi*), bliss (*ānanda*), will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). The beings that correspond to these powers are the following: Śāmbhava, Śaktija, Mantramaheśvara, Mantreśvara, and Mantra.[32]

Śiva is said to be the first category of existence of pure creation. At this initial level of creation it is the energy (*śakti*) of consciousness (*citi*) which is predominant, and accordingly is said to represent the state in which the Light of Self-Awarencess as an "I" is made explicit.[33] As the objective world at this stage exists in a latent form, so no question of duality, or of bondage, arises at the level of Śiva.

The next state of manifestation of pure creation is that of Energy or Śakti. The first and second stages of manifestation are believed to be the most important ones. The coming into being of these two does not occur in a graduated manner, that is, one stage succeeding the other; rather they arise simultaneously and spontaneously. The union between Śiva and Śakti is of the same nature which exists between fire and flame. Although the experience of these stages is characterized by perfect unity or non-difference, yet there exists, although an implicit one, an element of predication in them, and finds its appropriate expression in the "I am." It is the cosmic power of bliss (*ānanda*) which is dominant at the stage of Śakti.

The third category of pure creation is that of Sadāśiva, of Śiva who is eternal. This category of manifestation is characterized by the energy of will (*icchā*). At this stage the objective manifestation exists simply in outlines, and so may be linked to the outlines of a painter. These outlines are still in the form of ideas, and so no actual outline exists. Whatever objectivity may exist at this stage, it is simply in the form of desire.[34] There is thus a shift of focus, at this stage, from pure subjectivity to the "this". Even though there may be an implicit shift towards objectivity, yet it is "I" which is dominant in the "I am this."

The fourth manifestational category of existence of pure creation is that of Īśvara. This stage of existence is characterized by the energy of knowledge (*jñāna*). At this stage consciousness of unity is disturbed when the "I" is made to merge into the "this." One of the consequences of this submergence of the "I" into the "this" is this: The latter is being viewed as the substratum of the former. It is at this stage where the root-impurity (*āṇava-mala*) begins its implicit operation, and accordingly the sense of individuation begins to come into being. The state of Īśvara can best be described by referring to the above analogy of a painter. The painting upon the canvas has been spread in such a manner that the canvas is no more visible.[35] Even though the canvas may be covered by the paint, yet the picture exists only in outlines, and not in actuality. It is, thus, a manifestational stage in which there is neither complete unity nor duality. It is a state in-between the two, which means the beings of this category do not, in clear terms, say: "I am this."[36]

The final category of pure creation is that of Sadvidyā, or what may be called the stage of pure wisdom. It is the power of action (*kriyā*) which dominates this stage. At this stage exists the equilibrium between the subjective and the objective, and so the emphasis is in equal measure both on the "I" and the "this".[37] It is from this stage downwards that the sphere of *māyā* begins to operate, which denotes the beginning of impure creation.[38] Upon the opening up of the impure way, consciousness gets externalized and so the microcosmic manifestation begins to operate, which ultimately terminates in the emergence of the differentiated subjects and objects.

As the manifestational emergence of pure creation occurs in the order of Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśiva, Īśvara and Sadviyā, so its reversion begins in the reverse order. Self-recognition as being of the nature of Paramaśiva is nothing else but the submergence of the individual consciousness into the Universal Consciousness. The submergence from Sadvidyā to Śiva corresponds to the sinking (*laya*) of individual consciousness into the all-inclusive Universal Consciousness. The individual self, in order to have the experience of pure unity of Being, has successively to traverse the realms of Sadvidyā, Īśvara, Sadāśiva, Śakti, and Śiva.[39]

Insofar as the impure creation is concerned, it is said to be of the nature of obscuration, that is, the tendency is to conceal or veil the essential nature of consciousness. Śiva, which is consciousness, while projecting itself in different forms that are constitutive of the phenomenal world, is made to appear as being limited and a bound soul (*paśu*). This appearance of Śiva as a limited and bound self, figuratively speaking, denotes the destruction of the divinity of Śiva. It is a theology which maintains that God empties himself of his divinity by reducing himself to the level of a limited being. This idea of God emptying himself of divinity finds its equivalent in Christianity where God, while incarnating himself as Jesus of Nazerath, becomes completely human, and thereby becomes a limited being. It is the insertion of God in history which imposes the historical necessity upon him. It is in the context of God becoming a creature of history that a theological assertion is made: God empties himself of his divinity by becoming man. In relation to Trikism it means that God atomizes himself the moment he, as it were, transforms himself into entitites, sentient and insentient, that constitute the world. Not only does Śiva become, during the process of manifestation, a limited being; he also assumes the form of insentient entities, which are known as the categories of *māyā* (*māyā-tattva*).[40] The elements, veiled by *māyā*, are reduced to historical finitude, and accordingly are referred to as beings of limited or atomic nature. As limited beings, they erroneously identify the Self with the limited and finite empirical self, and thereby experience the limitation of differentiation. In this manner a complete cleavage takes place in consciousness, and consequently is given rise to the epistemic difference, which means that everything in the world is seen as being different from one's own self. Whatever knowledge, thus, we have of ourselves, or of the world, it is always in terms of difference. Empirical knowledge is not possible unless there is difference. It is the sense of difference which sets me apart from the other. It is the knowedge of difference which constitutes the world of impure creation. It is the category of *māyā* which is responsible for the emergence of difference. It is Īśvara, or the Lord, who ushers in the entire process of cosmic manifestation.[41]

The difference that exists between the pure and impure creation is this: The former, being free from the traces or taints of *māyā,* represents the absolute state of non-difference of the Absolute. The beings of this realm too experience absolute unity. The impure creation, on the other hand, is the product of *māyā,* and so is characterized by the consciousness of duality. *Māyā,* which is equivalent to Śakti, may be seen as the creative power of Śiva. As such it has two aspects: It, on the one hand, has the power of veiling or concealing the essential nature of the Self and, on the other hand, has the power of giving rise to the world of limited beings and entities. That which is create is also said to be of two kinds: Sentient and insentient. *Māyā,* through its power of obscuration, allows the Self to appear as a limited being. The characteristic mark of a limited being is its ignorance concerning its own essential nature.[42]

THE FIVE FACTORS OF LIMITATION

The obscuration of the Self occurs on account of the five factors of limitation (*pañca-kañcukas*). They are aptitude (*kalā*), knowledge (*vidyā*), desire (*rāga*), time (*kāla*), and destiny or fate (*niyati*).[43] These five limiting factors function as sheaths. It is on account of these sheaths that the Self loses its full capacity of knowing its own true nature.[44] Upon veiling the Self, the sheaths give rise to a limited self and to matter. The self experiences all kinds of limitation once caught up in the web of matter. The sheaths collectively are termed as *puruṣa.* The first manifestation of *māyā* is *kalā* or aptitude. This manifestation of *māyā* denotes the limitation of the power of activity (*kriyā-śakti*). Consequently one thinks of oneself as being limited as a doer.[45] As the activity of *kalā* is impure, so whatever action is performed under its influence, it is termed as impure action (*karman*). *Karman*, or the action of *kalā,* has always an ethical dimension. An action that is of ethical nature always gives rise to bondage. In contrast to *karman,* there is a form of action which is pure and does not give rise to bondage. An action that is pure is termed as *kriyā.* An action (*kriyā*) is pure when it is spontaneous and motiveless. It is pure action which frees man from the bondage that emerges on account of *karman.* A being who is freed from the impact of *kalā* or *karman* by *kriyā* is placed in the realm of beings called Vijñānakalā. Likewise is the second sheath, which is that of knowledge. When associated with impure knowledge (*aśuddha-vidyā*), we have the experience of duality, which means that one does not know who oneself essentially is.[46] In contrast to impure knowledge, we have pure knowledge, which is marked by the experience of non-duality, and so is said to be of unlimited nature. The third sheath is that of desire (*rāga*), which denotes attachment, and its opposite is aversion (*dveṣa*). The sense of attachment emerges when one has the experience of imperfection or of lack of something. What it means is this: One desires that which one has not, and so desires to possess it.[47] Once in possession of the desired object, one gets so attached to it that one remains under the constant fear of losing it. It is this desire for possession which continues to be till one remains in the grip of causal determinism (*kāla*). It is by transcending the causal determinism that one gains complete freedom from desire. The causal determinism can be transcended only by knowing one's essential nature. Upon the abrogation of time, which is the fourth limiting factor, there emerge such forms of freedom which time and space are responsible in curtailing. Finally, we have the fifth limiting factor, namely, that of *niyati*.[48] *Niyati* is the embodiment of unfreedom, and unfreedom is opposite of freedom. Destiny, thus, may be seen to be identical with what in philosophical terms is called the law of restriction or determinism. What it means in relation to an individual being is this: He is incapable of realizing that which he desires to have by willing on account of him being tied to the law of cause and effect. Whatever we do in the phenomenal world of cause and effect, it has to be done within the parameters of natural law, which means that mere willing or desiring will not terminate in what we will or desire, because both our will and desire are being conditioned by the causal laws that are operative in the world in which we live and exist. Destiny may be seen as that causal force or power by which an individual being (*paśu*) remains bound, which in metaphysical terms means unfreedom.

If it is *a priori* assumed that an individual is nothing but Śiva itself, does it mean that Śiva, through the law of causality, remains bound? If so, then Śiva cannot at all be considered as the Transcendent. To this question the response from the Trika thinkers is that Śiva is absolute freedom and so does not at all suffer, even in its atomized form, from the limitation of determinism. Śiva transcends causality, because he has the absolute power of giving rise to an effect merely by willing it. Śiva, accordingly, is said to be beyond both the cause and effect determinism. It is Śiva who is allowing the law of cause and effect to operate in the phenomenal world.[49]

Insofar as the element of time (*kāla*) is concerned, and about which we have briefly spoken above, it has to be considered in the context of different views that have been offered by the various schools of thought.

There are some schools of thought, particularly the ones that adhere to realism, who think of time as an independent entity or substance. Insofar as the Trika is concerned, it looks at time as being an attribute of consciousness. Epistemologically speaking, time is seen as an *a priori* conditioning of the way we think or know, which is to say that, apart from time, no knowing or thinking is possible. This understanding of time tells us that our knowing itself is nothing but a series of events. Even timelessness cannot be grasped apart from time, and that is why we speak of that which is eternal as an eternal time (*mahākāla*).

As time is constituted by events, it means that there is a before and an after (*pūrvāpara*), and so accordingly comes into being the sense of sequence or succession (*krama*). It means that time and sequence are identical.[50] When events succeed each other in a sequential order, we have time in terms of past, present and future, which denotes the fragmentation of time into seconds, minutes and hours. Even though time is understood as that which is characterized by a succession of events, yet it can also be understood as a continuum of eternal flow. In whatever manner time may be conceived, the fact remains that for the Trika time is not an independent entity. Rather time is seen as existing in consciousness, and accordingly conditions consciousness in such a manner that no reflection or knowing is allowed to occur apart from it. It is in this context that time is considered as a covering or sheath (*kañcuka*). Time is said to be a sheath because it binds consciousness. When we say that time conditions consciousness, we mean by it ordinary consciousness, and not the Supreme Consciousness, which means that time does not exist for Śiva,[51] and it is for this reason that Śiva is spoken of as being timeless (*akāla*).

The first five categories from Śiva to Sadvidyā constitute what is termed as pure creation. It is so called because no duality whatsoever, explicit or implicit, exists in the realms of pure creation. When we come to the sixth category, which is that of *māyā,* we confront impure creation. It is on account of *māyā* that the five limiting factors are given rise to, and accordingly indvidualized consciousness is allowed to emerge, which, within the Trika context, is spoken of as a bound or limited self *(aṇu, paśu, puruṣa)*.[52] One of the main features of bound consciousness is to function as a source of differentiation. The limited consciousness can neither think nor know anything without contrasting or comparing one with the other. It is this sense of contrast that ultimaltely results in the differentiation of the ordinary consciousness from the Supreme Consciousness. Upto the category of Sadvidyā, which belongs to pure creation, there is no consciousness of the object (*idaṁ*); rather it is the subjectivity of the subject that alone is experienced. At the level of the limited self (*puruṣa*) the sense of non-duality is totally lost. Consequently the self takes the other as being different from itself. Further the self does not think of the object as a mere appearance of reflection (*ābhāsa*), but takes the object as being real and autonomous entity.

CATEGORIES OF IMPURE CREATION

So far we have analyzed the five categories of pure creation, which extend from Śiva to Sadvidyā. On account of them being pure, these categories are characterized by non-difference. After Sadvidyā comes the catergory of *māyā,* and it is *māyā* which is responsible in giving rise to impure creation. The first five categories of *māyā* are the five limiting factors (*kañcuka*), which govern all the phenomenal categories. Upon giving rise to the five limiting factors, the category of *māyā* thereby is able to bifurcate consciousness into the subject (*puruṣa*) and the object (*prakṛti*). It is this division of consciousness into the subject and object which constitutes our experience of the world. It is impossible to have any form of empirical experience unless the subject confronts the object out there. The subject represents the non-material entity, whereas the object represents materiality. This confronting of the subject with the object expresses the idea as to how the process of objectification emerges. What it amounts to saying is this: Consciousness enters into the realm of objectification the moment *māyā* exerts its influence. Consequently all our empirical experiences are not in terms of unity, but in terms of differentiation and duality. It is the experience of duality which, according to the Trika, is the cause of human bondage.

Although the empirical consciousness may consider the subject and object as being different from each other, but the Trika is of the view that both of them are the self-expression of Śiva, and so are essentially non-different. It means that both of them, being the manifestation of Supreme Consciousness, are to be treated as being of one substance. The objective world of matter, as already pointed out, is seen as a reflection, and not as an actual transformation, of Śiva. This reflection of Śiva is of the same nature which is reflected in a mirror. Thus Jayaratha says:

> Just as images manifest in a mirror, for example, are essentially mere appearance, so too are (phenomena) manifest within consciousness. Thus, because they are external, (phenomena) have no being (*sattva*) of their own.

> The Lord says this (not with the intention of saying anything about the nature of things) but in order to raise the level of consciousness of those people who are attached to outer things: thus everything in this sense is essentially a mere appearance. (Knowing this), in order to quell the delusion of duality, one should not be attached to anything external.[53]

The above statements of Jayaratha establish that nothing exists apart from consciousness, or, should we say, everything exists *in* consciousness. The experience of this non-duality can come about if necessary identity between the external and the internal is established, which means that whatever events govern the universe are essentially internal ones. Whatever external objectification is experienced, it has to be treated as an apparent one.

Insofar as the cosmogensis is concerned, the first actual objective manifestation that occurs is that of *prakṛti.*[54] *Prakṛti* or primordial stuff remains motionless to the extent the three qualities, which are constitutive of materiality, of good (*sattva*), passionate (*rajas*) and inert (*tamas*) remain in the state of equilibrium.[55] The moment this equilibrium among the three strands is disturbed, there occurs the evolutionary process of manifestation, and in terms of which evolve the triad of intelligence (*buddhi*), egoity (*ahaṁkāra*), and the mind (*manas*). It is the function of intelligence to cognize or to know,[56] and so it remains engaged in reflecting over the self internally and over the objects externally. The knowing process is said to be of two kinds: Internal and external. The internal knowing comes to be on account of the residual traces (*saṁskāra*) that may be lying in some corner of the mind, or, should we say, the traces are the unanalyzed impressions of the subconscious mind. The extenal knowing, on the other hand, emerges when the intelligence, through the senses, comes in contact with that which is external to, or outside of, consciousness. Insofar as egoity is concerned, it is seen as that internal organ which identifies the eternal Self with the intelligence, and thereby ascribes the attributes of the latter upon the former. The most distinctive feature of egoity is that it controls the five vital airs, and thereby controls life itself.[57] Moreover, it is through this organ that willing is actualized. Lastly, we have the organ of mind (*manas*). The mind is an internal as well as subtle organ. It is through the mind that consciousness is able to actualize knowing, willing and feeling. This triad of evolutes are collectively called internal organs (*anthaḥkaraṇa*). Sometimes the term *manas* is used to designate the other two organs also.[58]

It is from the triad of intelligence, egoity, and mind that the five motor and the five sense organs evolve. The five motor organs are said to be speech (*vāk*), hand (*pāṇi*), which is the organ of work, the foot (*pāda*), the anus (*pāyu*), and the sexual organ (*upastha*). The sense organs, on the other hand, are the power of smell (*ghraṇa*), the power of taste (*rasana*), the power of perception (*cakṣu*), the power of touch (*tvāk*), and the power of audition (*śrota*).

Neither the motor organs nor the sensory organs, according to the Trika, are to be identified with the external limbs of the physical body. The organs, whether sensory or motor, are said to be subtle. As such they are believed to be located in the respective physical organs. It is not, according to this view, the physical eye which sees or perceives things. It is the subtle organ called eye which has the perception of that which is to be perceived. The subtle organ sees things by making the use of the physical eye. It is this very same principle which is applicable to other organs also. In this manner is explained the functioning of the motor and the sensory organs.

From the subtle sensory organs are evolved the five subtle elements (*pañca-tanmātras*). The five subtle elements are smell (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), colour (*rūpa*), touch (*sparśa*), and sound (*śabda*). The organ of smell is related to the element of odour; the organ of taste to the element of taste; the visual organ to the element of colour, and so on, so forth. The subtle elements (*tanmātra*) are considered as being an intermediary between the sense organs and that which is external. In other words, it is the subtle element which connects one to the other. It amounts to saying that it is the presence of colour, for example, both in the eye as well as in the object which empowers the eye to perceive the object that is external to it. It is the subtle element which relates the subjective to the objective, and vice versa. Since the subtle element has the capacity of connecting the subjective to the objective, it denotes that the subtle element has the characteristics of both the subjective and the objective.

From the five subtle elements[59] evolve the five great elements (*pañca-mahābhūtas*), which are: Earth (*pṛthvī*), water (*āpa, jala*), fire (*agni, tejas*), air (*vāyu*), and ether (*ākāśa*). The gross element earth is related to the subtle element of odour; water to taste; fire to colour; air to the subtle element of touch, and ether to the element of sound.

The universal manifestation, from the category of Śiva (*śiva-tattva*) to that of earth (*pṛthvī-tattva*), is constituted by thirty-six categories of existence—and all these categories are the projection of Paramaśiva. While the universal projection occurs in terms of succession (*krama*), the Projector, who is Paramaśiva, is said to be without succession (*akrama*). If creation is viewed from the perspective of Śiva, then it needs to be considered as being without succession. It is so because, according to the Trika, creation is not a physical activity. It is an activity within consciousness. This interpretation denotes that the difference that is experienced within creation is more apparent than real.[60] Accordingly we are told:

> The various categores of existence (*padārtha*), though distinct from one another in their (outer form), must be, in terms of their essential specific nature, (seen) a single collective reality.[61]

Concluding Remarks

While creation is said to be the self-expression of the Absolute, does it mean that Śiva, upon giving rise to creation out of itself, undergoes transformation or suffers from change? The Trika rejects the theory of causal transformation. It looks at Śiva as being without succession, and so accordingly as Transcendent. That which is Transcendent must necessarily not suffer from the change that is ascribed to entities that are phenomenal. The phenomenal causality, thus, is inapplicable to the Transcendent.[62] Insofar as Śiva is identified with the manifest[63] world, to that extent he may be seen undergoing change. This paradoxical aspect of the Absolute is brought out by Utpaldeva thus: "I bow to Śambhu who is the world, and is beyond the world."[64]

While discarding the theory of transformation (*pariṇāmavāda*), the Trika, however, adheres to the theory of reflection (*pratibimbavāda*). The manifest world, according to this theory, is neither the transformation of Śiva nor of Śakti. Rather the world is the projection of the Light of Consciousness, and so may be seen to be identical with the reflection that appears to the senses. Accordingly we are told:

> The Supreme Lord's unique state of emotivity (*asādhāraṇa-bhāva*) is the outpouring of pure Being (*mahāsattā*). It is manifest as the brilliance (*sphurattā*) of the universe which, if we ponder deeply, (is realized to be) the single flavour (*ekarasa*) of the essence of Beauty which is the vibration of the bliss of one's own nature.[65]

The world as Śiva's self-expression does not mean that Śiva actually transforms itself into the world. Rather it means that Śiva reflects the world in the same manner as one reflects one's image in a mirror. The Trika, thus, asserts that Śiva's self-manifestation as the world does not alter his essential nature, which is that of Light.[66] As the nature of Śiva is that of Light, so he reveals the entire phenomena through the power of consciousness. From this it is concluded that reflection and the reflected, Śiva and the manifest world, are one and identical.[67] Insofar as the manifest condition of the universe is concerned, it is characterized by the difference of diversity. As the universe consists of diversity, so it is characterized by a temporal succession of rise and fall. Creation, according to the Trika mysticism, denotes the death of Śiva, whereas the disappearance of creation symbolizes the actualization of Śiva's divinity (*akula*). The appearance and disappearance of the world is experienced by the yogī in terms of opening (*unmeṣa*) and closing (*nimeṣa*) of eyes. It implies, at the philosophical level, that alone has fall or rise which is impermanent, or which has an origin. That which is of the nature of change cannot be spoken of as being real. It is in the context of this philosophical thinking that the Trika speaks of creation as being of the nature of reflection.

The entire cosmic manifestation, right from Śiva to that of gross earth, consists of thirty-six categories (*tattvas*).[68] All the thirty-six categories have been reduced to five divisions (*kalās*), and each division is said to contain certain number of elements as well as realms (*bhuvanas*), which are inhabited by different types of beings. As to what kind of beings exist in a particualr realm is dependent upon the nature of the realm. The Trika cosmology believes that the number of such realms to be one hundred eighteen. The types of beings inhabiting these realms have broadly been classified as being of seven kinds.

The Trika further maintains that the emergence and dissolution, the entire show of activities, the process of bondage and liberation of beings of these realms is directed and controlled by Śiva through his manifold powers. As the phenomenal manifestation occurs through different stages of evolution, so accordingly each stage of manifestation is given the nomenclature of *tattva*—and a *tattva* is said to be the essence of various related entities. It is this essence which has the power of binding various entitites into a single whole.[69] A *tattva* as an essence, thus, does not disappear even when a cosmic dissolution (*laya*) takes place. A *tattva*, therefore, is seen as the fundamental element to which entities, which are constitutive of cosmic manifestation, are reduced to at the time of the universal dissolution, and out of which they emerge at the time of manifestation.

The Trika recognizes Śiva as the only *tattva* on account of him being the source of everything that is in the universe.[70] It is the unconditioned

Absolute who manifests itself as Śiva, Śakti and Nara—a triad that corresponds to the classification of existence as unity (*abheda*), unity-in-diversity (*bhedābheda*), and diversity (*bheda*), which accordingly are termed as Śiva-tattva, Vidyā-tattva and Māyā-tattva. The total number of elements, from the realm of unity to that of diversity, are said to be thirty-six, and so have been termed as being objective elements (*prameya-tattva*). They are so called because they can be intellectually reflected upon. The first five categories, from Śiva to Sadvidyā, are said to be of pure nature, and so the beings of these realms do not suffer from the impurity of duality. The beings of the pure realm are always aware of their divine nature. It is from the realm of *māyā* onwards from where issues forth the sense of difference, and so the beings of the impure creation are always subject to the consciousness of I-thou. It is this sense of duality which the Trika considers at the heart of the problem concerning human bondage. The aim of the Trika soteriology, thus, is to find out such ways and means by the employment of which duality is transcended and the supreme unity of Being is experienced. The one who attains to the state of absolute unity is considered to be a real yogī, who is no more bound to his human nature, which is marked by finitude.

The Absolute, in its transcendent aspect, is spoken of as Paramaśiva whose essential nature has two aspects: The static aspect and the dynamic aspect. The former aspect is referred to as Light (*prakāśa*) and the latter as Vibration (*spanda, vimarśa*), or as Śiva and Śakti. It is in through the dynamic aspect through which the Absolute manifests itself as Śiva and Śakti, which, at the religious level of devotion, is conceived of as the Divine Couple. It is the dynamic aspect of the Absolute which reflects the five cosmic powers of creation, preservation, dissolution, concealment, and grace. While manifesting itself as the cosmos, the Absolute, however, in itself does not undergo any change. Insofar as the static aspect is concerned, it expresses the unchanging nature of the Absolute. When reflected upon in its changeless aspect, the Absolute appears as Śiva, and when conceived of in its dynamic aspect, it then appears as Śakti.[71]

This entire drama of manifestation is a movement of descent from the subtle (*sūkṣma*) to the gross (*sthūla*). Even the movement of evolution within *prakṛti* is from the subtle to the gross. It is in this context of manifestational evolution from the subtle to the gross that the idea of unity, unity-in-diversity, and diversity may be reflected upon. That which is very subtle reflects the state of unity, whereas that which is less subtle denotes the state of unity-in-diversity, and that which is gross explains the content of diversity. As the manifestational evolution of the universe occurs from the subtle to the gross, so the dissolution of it has to take place in reverse order, that is, from the gross to the subtle, which means the submergence of the gross in to the subtle, of the object (*idaṁ*) into the subject (*ahaṁ*). This process of cosmic dissolution ultimately gets submerged into the unity of Śiva-Śakti from where everything had been emitted. The emergence and submergence of the manifest is a free (*svātantrya*) sport (*līlā*) of Śiva, which means that Śiva is totally free to cause the world to be or not to be. What it means is this: Śiva can be with or without creation, and Utpaladeva expresses the sovereignty of the will of Śiva thus:

> I bow to Śiva who causes the world to come into existence and who also contradicts (dissolves) it, who takes the form of the world and who also remains without the world.[72]

REFERENCES

1. *TĀ*, 4.185: *Sārametatsamastasya yaccitsāram jaḍaṁ jagat.*
2. Ibid., 3.4.
3. *P.Sā.*, 48.
4. *TĀ*, 3.64-65.
5. *ĪPV*, 2.4.1: *Viśve hi bhāvāstyasyaiva śaktirūpeṇa svarūpātmatvena sthitāḥ.*
6. *Anuttarāṣṭikā*, 8. . . *Cidarpane rajate.*
7. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 1.5.1.
8. *Anuttarāṣṭikā*, 2, 6.
9. Ibid., 6.
10. Ibid., 2: *Mithyāmohakṛdeṣa.*
11. Ibid.
12. *TĀ*, 9. 9: *Svatantratā ca cinmātra vapuṣah parameśituḥ/*
    Svatantraṁ ca jaḍam ceti tadanyonyaṁ virudhyate//
13. *Pr.Hṛ.*, 4.
14. *ĪPV*, 2.4.20: *Parāmarśalakṣaṇam tu svātantryam. . . .*
15. *Bh.G.*, 3.22.
16. *Madhyamakaśāstra*, 24.8.
17. *ĪPV*, 2.3.4.
18. *PS*, 11.
19. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 2.4.1.
20. *TĀ*, 14. 20: *Svātantryācca maheśasya tirobhūto'pyasau svayam/*
    Parādvāreṇa vābhyeti bhūyo anugrahamapyalam//
21. *TĀ*, 8.163. The Trika does not adhere to the notion which thinks of Śiva as the bearer of grace. Rather it looks at Śiva as being grace itself. And grace for the Trika denotes the "fall of Śiva's Energy" (*śaktipāta*).

22. Ibid., 14.24.
23. *ĪPV,* 3.1.3.
24. Ibid.: *Nimeṣaṇam tu . . . antārūpatodrecanam.*
25. *TĀ,* 3.67: *Ha hi viśvasya vācyavāckātmanā dvidhā avabhāsaḥ.*
26. *Ī.P.Kā.,* 1.5.13.
27. *PTV,* 1.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.: *Vaikharī tu tadubhayabhedasphuṭatāmayyeva.*
30. *TĀ,* 9.60.
31. *I.P.Kā.,* 4.1.12.
32. *TĀ,* 6.52.
33. *ĪPV,* 1.1.
34. K.C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta: A Historical and Philosophical Study.* Varanasi, 1963, p. 365.
35. Ibid., p. 366.
36. *ĪPV,* 2.191.
37. Ibid., 2.196.
38. Cf., *P.Sā.,* 15: *Māyā-śakti* is equated with "the mask that covers the Self of Śiva."
39. *TĀ,* 6.80-81.
40. Ibid., 9.149.
41. Ibid., 1.61, 79-80; 3-196; 4-10; 9.148.
42. *ĪPV,* 1.35.
43. Jose Perera, *Hindu Theology: A Reader* (Garden City, NY, 1976), schema 34, p. 397.
44. *PS,* 16-18.
45. *TĀ,* 9.172, 208, 213, 215.
46. *Ī.P.Kā.,* 4.1.12: *Sarvo mamāyaṁ vibhavaḥ.*
47. *TĀV,* 4. 17.
48. *TĀ,* 9.202.
49. Ibid., 9.7: *Kārya-kāraṇa-bhāvo yaḥ śivecchāparikalpitaḥ.*
50. *ĪPV,* 2.1.3.
51. *TĀ,* 13.206.
52. Ibid., 8.293.
53. *TĀV,* 3.21.
54. *TĀ,* 6.171.
55. Ibid., 6.180.
56. Ibid., 6.185; 9.227.
57. Ibid., 6.185.
58. Ibid., 9.235.
59. *PS,* 21-22.
60. *Kramastotram,* 11, 13.
61. *MM,* p. 47.
62. As to what Transcendent denotes, and how it is beyond the phenomenal

categories of thought and experience, is best described in the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* (6.4) thus: "The sun shines not there, neither moon nor stars. There these flashes of lightning do not shine nor does fire. It is that by whose shining all things shine. It is the light of that which illumines all this."

63. *Sp.Nr.*, p. 12: "Indeed all things are manifest because they are nothing but manifestation. The point being that nothing is manifest apart from manifestation."
64. *Śivastotrāvalī* (hereinafter cited as *Ś.St.*), 2.8: *Namaḥ saṁsārarūpāya niḥsaṁsārāya śāmbhave.*
65. *MM,* p. 44.
66. *TĀ*, 3.44.
67. *ĪP*, 1.5.1, 7.
68. *ĪPV*, 2.3.5.
69. *ĪP*, 2.1.2.
70. *TĀ*, 9.2.
71. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 8.12.14.
72. *Ś.St.*, 2.8: *Saṁsāraikanimitāya saṁsāraikavirodhine/*
Namaḥ saṁsārarūpaya niḥsaṁsārāya sambhave//

CHAPTER 7

Bondage and Liberation

It is *a priori* assumed that the empirical mode of existence does not represent the ought of life. In whatever way, or from whatever perspective, we may look at life in the world, the undeniable fact that is observed is that human beings not only experience limitation of every type, but also the very datum of life is characterized by suffering. It is the individuation or atomization of life which is seen as the crux of the problem. It is the state of atomization of life which, according to the Trika, represents human bondage (*pāśa*). If existence, in its empirical mode, is in bondage, there must then be freedom from this bondage—a state of existence in which human finitude is completely transcended. If freedom from bondage is possible, it means that bondage is not innate to life; it is only of adventitious nature. Were bondage to be innate to existence, then there would be no freedom. Since such is not the case, it denotes that bondage is not real, but an artificial one.

The *a priori* axiom of bondage and liberation presupposes that there is someone who is in bondage, and so is in need of being freed from this bondage. The question that arises is this: Who is it who is in bondage and has to be made free from the fetters of bondage? It is the human person who is said to be in bondage, and so has to be freed from the fetters that bind him to the peg of bondage. Because of being in bondage, the individual being has been equated to an animal (*paśu*). As it is rope which ties the animal to the peg of unfreedom, so it is the rope of ignorance which ties the individual to the peg of saṁsāric becoming. As bondage is caused by ignorance, so it is the destruction of ignorance that causes freedom to be, which, in religious terms, means freedom from endless becoming (rebirth). Destruction of ignorance is accomplished upon the arising of appropriate knowledge (*jñāna*) concerning one's essential nature. The Trika soteriology believes that it is the soteric knowledge, and not any other knowledge, which terminates in the emergence of freedom.[1] It is the firm belief of the Trika that each individual being essentially is identical with the supreme Being, that is, Śiva. If this be the case, it means that every individual being is essentially free. The individual self, although infinite and limitless, experiences bondage in terms of limitations and finitude on account of taking the finite as the basis of the real and actual. It is, thus, the finite understanding concerning the nature of the self which constitutes ignorance, and so is, accordingly, seen as the source and basis of human bondage.

THE CONTENT OF IGNORANCE

To put the matter in precise terms, bondage is nothing else but ignorance concerning the actual knowledge of the Self. Ignorance, however, does not mean the absence of knowledge. It means that kind of knowledge which is incomplete or erroneous, or which is of the nature of illusion (*apūrṇa-jñāna, apūrṇa-khyāti*).[2] Insofar as the nature and content of ignorance is concerned, it has been conceived of differently by the different schools of Indian philosophy. Broadly speaking, there are two main schools of interpretation. One school of thought thinks of ignorance as being causeless, and therefore beginningless. The other school of thought thinks that it is logical monstrosity to speak of ignorance as being causeless. Our experience in the world tells us that there is nothing that can be termed as being causeless. Whatever there is in the world has a cause. How can we, in the context of our experience in the world, speak of ignorance as being causeless? If ignorance is causeless, then we have an imponderable problem, which is: Ignorance can never be terminated.

It is true to say that it is impossible to locate the cause of ignorance. Since we cannot say what causes ignorance to be, so this school speaks of ignorance as having a transcendental cause. It is to this view to which the Trika adheres. As ignorance has its source in some transcendental cause, so accordingly the Trika maintains that the emergence of ignorance is simply the sport (*līlā*) of the Lord. There are also some schools of thought who assign the cause of ignorance to the deficiency in human reasoning. According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, the cause of ignorance consists of sixteen wrong elements of logical reasoning. The Sāṁkhya-Yoga, on the other hand, view that ignorance is beginningless on account of the mutual confusion between intelligence (*puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*).[3] The Advaita Vedānta considers the category of *māyā* to be the cause of ignorance. *Māyā* can neither be termed as existent (*sat*) nor non-existent (*asat*). Were it to be real, then we would have a dualism in which two independent entities, *brahman* and *māyā,* would be competing with each other—and such a standpoint would go against the non-dualistic standpoint of the school. Moreover, it would be impossible, in case *māyā* is seen to be real, to negate ignorance, and that would denote the continuance of bondage. Equally it is said that *māyā* is not non-existent. Were it non-existent, then we could not account for the illusory cognition. Since we cannot affirmatively say whether *māyā* is existent or non-existent, so the only option left is to speak of it as inexpressible and inconceivable. It is *māyā* which gives rise to illusory cognitions, and it is on account of *māyā* that such cognitions are taken to be real. It is upon the negation of *māyā* that right knowledge emerges, which simultaneously denotes the negation of knowledge that is illusory. Emergence of right knowledge also denotes the correct knowledge concerning the exact nature of the Absolute. It is this view concerning *māyā* which the Advaitins have propounded. Insofar as the Buddhists, particularly the Mahāyāna Buddhists, are concerned, they think of ignorance as that which identifies the momentary consciousness with that which is stable and substantial.

In the context of above views of different schools concerning ignorance the Trika thinks that it is Lord himself who is the cause of ignorance. The Absolute, through the process of self-manifestation or projection, appears both in mental and material forms.[4] It is the self-projection of the Lord as the material world which constitutes his cosmic activities of creation, preservation, dissolution, obscuration and revelation.[5] The Lord, while concealing his divine nature, appears as a bound self which, on account of ignorance, thinks of itself as being different from everything that is in the world as well as from the Lord.[6] It is the sense of *absence* or *aloofness* which is, as it were, the basic nature of ignorance, and thereby of human bondage.

The individual self, although bound, is nothing else but the Lord itself. It is the Lord who, by incarnating himself as the limited being, not only empties himself, as it were, of his divinity, but also subjects himself to the sequence of temporality and finitude. At this juncture it may be asked as to why some individuals seek liberation and others not when it is the same Lord who is among all the individual beings? If it is assumed that each individual being is but the manifestation of the Lord, then all the individual beings, who are in bondage, should be liberated as and when any individual reaches the soteric goal of liberation. Such paradoxical type of questions are bound to emerge in the context of a philosophy which believes in strict monism. The answer that the Trika has given concerning this question is this: The one's who cultivate the soteric path of liberation is not because they desire to reach the goal of liberation. It is because of divine grace (*anugraha*) or divine intervention. The emergence of the very desire for salvation is because of the descent of grace of the Lord.[7] Both bondage and liberation are believed to be the two aspects of the Lord's will which, in the form of grace, frees individuals from the condition of bondage.[8] The Lord, while concealing his nature in the process of manifestation, also reveals himself when his grace descends upon those who are devoted to him.

THE NATURE OF LIBERATION

The basic question that needs to be answered is this: What is liberation? The Trika concept of liberation can well be appreciated if we understand as to how the various Indian religious schools of thought have treated it. Let us, first of all, take into consideration the treatment given to this concept by the Vijñānavādin Buddhists. The Vijñānavādin Buddhists speak of the "primal mind" (*citta*) as being of the nature of purity. There are no defilements in it whatsoever. This primal mind, however, suffers from an adventitious type of ignorance. Why? Because the defilements of various kinds veil its pure nature. As the essential nature, on account of ignorance, remains concealed, so there is given rise to an erroneous knowledge which mistakenly takes that to be real which actually is apparent. It is in and through the defiled mind that all our experiences of the world are actualized. So whatever empirical experiences we have are all of impure nature. It, therefore, amounts to saying that the empirical knowledge we have is erroneous, or a knowledge which does not reveal the Real; rather it conceals it. Simultaneously it would also mean that, upon the cessation of defilements, the world of appearance will be known as being unreal.[9] The destruction of defilements, thus, would denote the resotration of the primal state of mind, which is that of purity. It is this primal state of the mind which, according to the Vijñānavādins, is identical with liberation. This idea of liberation conflicts with the Buddhist dogmatic assertion with regard to mind as being of momentary nature. If the mind is momentary, then which mind is pure and which one is identical with liberation? The very momentariness of mind would indicate that the past impurities, which too must necessarily be momentary, cannot at all affect the emergent mind. In that case, then liberation is not possible.

As far as the Śūnyavāda school of Buddhism is concerned, it believes in the non-existence both of knowledge and liberation. As the nature of the Absolute is that of "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*), so to speak of knowledge, or of bondage, or of liberation is meaningless, as all such categories are nothing but mental constructs or concepts, and concepts do not at all correspond to what is real. The Śūnyavādins reject outright the linguistic theory of correspondence, which maintains that there is a direct correspondence between concepts and what they represent. Shorn off conceptual verbiage, the aim of this school is to realize the real as Emptiness, which neither can be spoken of as existence, nor non-existence, neither both, nor neither of them. This kind of deconstructionism has no use either of liberation or of bondage. If the ultimate is Emptiness, it means that there is neither the realizer nor the realization, neither bondage nor liberation.[10]

The Sāṁkhya school of thought also does not fare well. It thinks of the world as an evolute of an insentient principle (*prakṛti*). The *puruṣa,* the principle of sentiency, is viewed as being of the nature of passivity, which means that it does not involve itself with the functioning of *prakṛti.* Although inherently passive, *puruṣa* somehow, and we do not how, gets caught up with *prakṛti,* which means its embodiment. It is upon becoming embodied that the *puruṣa* has to suffer the bondage of cyclical becoming in terms of rebirth. In order to gain freedom from the embodied mode of existence, and thereby from rebirth, the *puruṣa* has to dissociate itself completely from *prakṛti.* It is in dissociation in which liberation lies, as it were, hidden. The self realizes dissociation, and thereby liberation, through the process of gaining correct knowledge concerning the twenty-four evolutes of *prakṛti.* The Trika asks the question concerning the liberative knowledge of the Sāṁkhya in the following terms: Where does this knowledge occur? It cannot occur in *prakṛti* on account of it being inert. That which is inert cannot have the possibility of knowing anything. If it is maintained that the liberative knowledge occurs in the self, then the Sāṁkhya contradicts itself when it speaks of the self as being passive. Knowing is an activity, and that which is passive cannot engage in any form of activity. How is it, then, possible for the self to have knowledge of any kind? Thus the very Sāṁkhyan concept concerning liberation and bondage stand contradicted.

In contrast to the above different concepts of liberation, the Trika thinks of liberation as being equivalent to self-recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). What it means is this: Liberation is nothing else than to recognize the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of the Self. Insofar as the individual self thinks of itself as being limited, or finite, or differnt from Śiva, to that extent it will remain in bondage, or will experience the mode of existence which phenomenality implies. Liberation as well as bondage, thus, have epistemological implications.[11] To the extent ignorance obscures consciousness, to that extent bondage exists. Upon the removal of ignorance, liberation, which is identical with freedom and is equivalent to self-recognition, emerges. It is in and through the cultivation of Śivayoga, which we will be taking into consideration when discussing the Trika means of liberation, that Śivahood within is realized—and Śivahood is characterized by the total submergence (*samāveśa*) of the individual self into the Universal Self, or of the microcosm into the macrocosm. This experience of identity, at the epistemic level, is spoken of as recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). It is in terms of recognition that the self is recognized as being non-different from the absolute I-consciousness (*parāsaṁvid*), which is Śiva. Also in and through the recognitive knowledge the world, which is outside of consciousness, is being recognized as manifestation or appearance of Śiva.[12] Conceptually and epistemically there may exist congnitive difference between consciousness and matter, but ontically no such difference exists between the two, as the latter is the projection of the former.

THE NATURE OF IMPURITIES

If it is asserted, as do the Trikites, that the individual self (*jīva*) is non-different from Śiva, then how can, it may be asked, impurity at all have the power of obscuring that which, in principle, cannot be concealed? Also the question may be asked as to what is the relation of impurity with Śiva? If seen from the point of Śiva, human bondage, which comes to be on account of adventitious defilements, is nothing else but the sport or play of the Lord. So it is the Lord himself who, out of his own free will, becomes the bound self. The very desire of Śiva of making himself limited, and thereby bound, is called impurity.[13]

There are, according to the Trika, three types of impurity (*malas*), which are as follows: *āṇava-mala, māyīya-mala,* and *kārma-mala.* All of them are said to be the products of *māyā,* and so *māyā* may be understood as that principle which has the power of giving rise to limitations. It is the *āṇava-mala* which is considered as the root-cause of all kinds of limitations. Insofar as *māyīya-mala* is concerned, it is seen that kind of impurity which separates one from the other, and thereby gives rise to the dualistic structures of thought and perception.[14] All the impurities are said to have their origin in *māyā*.

The *āṇava-mala,* or the atomic impurity, is the root-impurity. It is the function of this *mala* to identify consciousness, which *a priori* is assumed to be unlimited, with that which is bound or limited, and in our case it implies the limitation of the individual person. Limited indviduality, from a psychological viewpoint, is spoken of as "ego". What it amounts to saying is this: The unlimited Self, on account of root-impurity, is taken to be a limited ego—and so the individual being thinks of itself as being finite. That which is finite is also impermanent. So whatever is of history, or belongs to history, remains confined to the bounds of space, and functions within the sequential order of time. Both finitude and impermanence denote imperfections, and so the *āṇava-mala* signifies the imperfect state of being in relation to the Self. This does not, however, mean that the infinite consciousness, which is identical with Śiva, has become imperfect or limited. Rather the individual self, under the influence of *āṇava-mala,* thinks of itself as a finite and limited person.[15] The individual self experiences itself as being imperfect when it, on account of ignorance, identifies itself with the empirical ego. It is ignorance, which is identical with impurity, which really gives rise to the sense of limitation, and when the sense of limitation is translated into an actual experience, it denotes that consciousness is not free and that one is destitute of consciousness of freedom. The net-result of *āṇava-mala* is unfreedom, which, from a soteriological standpoint, is equivalent to bondage. It is for this reason that the *āṇava-mala* is given the epithet of root-impurity. Why? Because it holds within itself the other two impurities.

The second impurity is that of *māyīya-mala.* It is an impurity which gives rise to the sense of division. The sense of division comes to the fore when one thing is put in opposition to the other. It is through the process of contrast, comparison and exclusion that the knowledge of differentiation is allowed to emerge. Consequently the individual thinks of itself as a separate entity, and so is unable to experience essential unity of Being. In relation to Śiva the self sees itself as being totally different, and so remains completely unaware as to its essential nature. While identifying itself with the empirical ego, the self takes the name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*) as a real entity existing in its own right. It is upon the renunciation of the empirical ego that the real nature of the self is recognized, and thereby is transcended the realm of difference and diversity. As the *māyīya-mala* gives rise to the sense of duality, so the knowledge that is gained under its impact is also of the nature of difference.[16] The sense of difference, however, will not emerge unless one thinks of oneself as being limited. It is the sense of limitation which is responsible in giving rise to the experience of difference. Thus *māyīya-mala* is already existent in the *āṇava-mala*. It is upon the eradication of the *āṇava-mala* that the *māyīya-mala* ceases to be.

The third impurity is that of *kārma-mala,* or the impurity of action. It is an impurity which emerges on account of actions which are performed by a self that thinks of itself as being limited. The actions that a limited self performs are not spontaneous, but are performed with the intention of achieving a specific goal. The achievement of the goal is believed to result in satisfying the desires that arise due to the sense of lack. It is the sense of lack which seizes the self, and to fulfil a particular lack, the individual engages in some action, believing thereby that the performance of actions would terminate in the eradication of the lack. It is the eradication of the lack which is the goal, and the actions are performed to arrive at this goal. Since any kind of lack signifies an imperfection, so the actions that ensue in the state of lack would also be of the nature of imperfection. An action which is imperfect must necessarily be tainted by ignorance. Thus the actions that are performed in the state of ignorance give rise to *kārma-mala.* The one who performs actions under the influence of *kārma-mala* has to reap the fruit thereof. Whether fruit is good or bad, the performer cannot escape the consequences. The consequences of such actions ultimately terminate in the emergence of cyclical rebirth, which means that the person who is given to such actions will experience, in one form or the other, human bondage. In contrast to *kārma,* we have an action (*kriyā*) that is motiveless, and so does not bear any fruit. The action of this type is not performed for satisfying one's desires, or for removing the lack which one may be experiencing. It is performed, without any motive, for the good of the other. This action (*kriyā*), thus, does not give rise to human bondage. This form of action issues forth from such a person who has realized the unity of Being, and thereby has gained freedom from all such limitations which human condition denotes.

From the above analysis we come to learn that the self experiences bondage on account of impurities—and the function of impurities is to conceal the real and authentic nature of what we are. An impurity is termed as an impurity because of its tendency or inclination of obscuring the essential nature of the self. Insofar as we remain under the influence of impurities, so far we shall never know what we essentially are. The eradication of impurities, however, would result in the revelation of the self, which means that the self will no more be obscured by the impurities. Eradication of impurities also would mean the realization of ultimate autonomy, and thereby of returning to our primal state. The reversion to primal condition would denote freedom from such dualistic structures which are responsible in making the individual experience both boundedness and finitude. The realization of transcendental freedom denotes the merging (*samāveśa*) of the self into the infinite Self, which is of the nature of pure consciousness (*saṁvid*). If liberation, on the one hand, means freedom from impurities and, on the other hand, submergence in the absolute I-consciousness, then what is the real significance of liberation? Insofar as liberation is seen as freedom from impurities, to that extent it is a negative concept. What, then, is the positive aspect of liberation? It is, according to the Trika, the realization of our essential or intrinsic nature (*svasvabhāva*), which is said to be nothing else than Śivahood itself.[17] This understanding of liberation as being both negative and positive is accepted by all the Indian schools of thought—and the Trika is no exception. Liberation is negative to the extent it is interpreted as freedom from bondage, and positive when seen in terms of realization of the essential nature of the self.

THE NATURE OF THE SELF

If liberation is said to be identical with the realization of the essential nature of the self, which, prior to its actualization, is obscured by impurities, then the question is: What constitutes the essentital nature of the self? On this question of the essential nature of the self there are differences of opinion among the various schools of thought. The Vaiśeṣika school of thought thinks of the self as pure existence (*sat*) with no power of knowing anything, or doing anything, or even feeling pain or joy. Any kind of activity, whether of cognition or of action, is seen to be purely adventitious to the self. Being adventitious, they disappear or cease to be upon the attainment of liberation. This would mean that the self, at the time of liberation, would become lifeless like a stone. This view of the self is rejected by the other schools of thought. Utpala Vaiṣṇava has expressed his resentment against this view in these words: "I would rather forgo liberation and accept being born in the forest of Vrindavana than pray for the liberation of Vaiśeṣika."[18]

In contrast to the Vaiśeṣika view of the self as being only pure existence, the Sāṁkhya school thinks of it as being both existence (*sat*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). The adherents of the Sāṁkhya, however, fail in recognizing the most essential aspect of the self, which is that of bliss (*ānanda*). The liberated self (*puruṣa*) of the Sāṁkhya is always destitute of the experience of joy, and so too this view does not do justice to the actual nature of the self. The Vedānta view, in comparison to the above views, makes a great improvement when it declares that the nature of the self is existence-knowledge-bliss (*sad-cit-ānanda*). What it means in the context of the liberated is this: The liberated realizes his essential nature as being existence-knowledge-bliss, which is also the nature of *brahman*. In other words, the liberated is not essentially different from *brahman*, and this identity is expressed in terms of unity of *ātman-brahman*. Liberation, within the Vedāntic framework, denotes of having the experience of non-duality (*advaita*). However, the Self (*ātman*) remains inactive (*niṣkriya*) in the state of liberation.

In contrast to the above views concerning the nature of the self, the Trika not only accepts the self as being identical with existence-consciousness-bliss, but also believes it to be endowed with activity (*kriyā*). The activity that arises from the liberated is spontaneous precisely because it issues forth from the full. As freedom or activity is the innate nature of the self, so the liberated person is seen as a being who is full of joyful activity. If all these positive qualities are the essential nature of the self, then unfreedom or bondage is seen to represent the state of unforgetfulness of an atomized individual. The state of bondage is that state in which we either forget or do not remember what we essentially are. In this context this is what Abhinavagupta has to say:

> The enlightenment (*prakāśa*) that dawns in the state of freedom is like the remembering of a forgotten wealth, and the forgotten wealth is the state of one's unity with all.[19]

As to why we have forgotten our essential nature is because of ignorance. The function of ignorance is to give rise to impurities, and consequently impurities conceal our real nature. Upon the concealment of our nature, we are given to notions (*vikalpa*) that are contrary to what reality in itself is. So whatever we think or express is always erroneous. The transcendental joy emerges upon the eradication of impurities, which simultaneously also means the negation of ignorance. The joy that emerges upon the removal of ignorance and of impurities is that type of joy which is innate to the self. It is a joy of liberation or of freedom, says Abhinavagupta:

> The joy of liberation is not like the acquired pleasure of material wealth, women, and wine.[20]

LIBERATION AND LIFE-IN-THE-WORLD

What implication, it may be asked, does this understanding concerning liberation has with regard to existence-in-the-world? Does liberation in the Trika mean total disappearance of the individual being, and thereby of the world itself? The Trika is of the view that the abandonment of the world is not a pre-requisite for the one who seeks to cultivate the soteriological path of liberation. Since the world is seen as the projection of Śiva, so it means that the former is non-different from the latter. An adept can, if he so wishes, approach liberation in and through the world. This positive or affirmative view tells us that liberation is a glow of light which is both celestial and terrestrial. If this be the case, it means that liberation is in no manner opposed to sensual enjoyment, as the latter is seen as the foretaste of the bliss that is experienced at gaining access to transcendental liberation. The Trika thinks that neither the world nor the sensual enjoyment give rise to what we call soteric impediments. Rather it is the attachment (*rāga*), born out of ignorance, that really causes bondage. Attachment is there on account of ego. Attachment or soteric hurdles can be overcome not by running away from the world or from life, but by freeing ourselves, truly and actually, from the confines of cage-like empirical ego. The very search for freedom should be seen as a positive negation, in that it is only the free person who has the possibility of enjoying life in the world to the fullest. This point is clearly brought out in the *Bhagavadgītā* when it says:

> One who enjoys objects with senses that are free from attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*) and are under one's full control, does the desirable thing, attains peace and joy.[21]

Liberation, within the Trika framework, is not a negative concept in the sense of escape from life or from the world. It looks at liberation as the ultimate fulfilment of life itself—and this fulfilment has to be accomplished in and through what we are. It does not, for example, look at sex as something unwanted or evil that has to be shunned. It, rather, views sex as emanating from the self itself. The aesthetic joy, whether sensual or abstract, is seen as the manifestation of the self. This understanding of joy or pleasure has its roots in the theory which says that pleasure does not issue from the object which is being enjoyed, but from the self itself. As and when the Trika concept of liberation is taken into consideration, we must keep this positive attitude towards life and the world in mind.

HIERARCHY OF STAGES

To arrive at the stage of realization, an adept, however, has to go through certain hierarchy of stages or levels. It is upon going through these stages successfully that an adept ultimately experiences the inner, which is equivalent to ontic, unity with the entire manifest world, which means that he sees himself in the All and the All in himself. The number of levels an adept has to traverse are said to be seven. Each stage has beings in accordance with the quality of the stage or realm. The beings of the seven realms or levels are known as the seven knowers (*sapta-pramātā*), and they are the *pralayākala* or *layākala, sakala, vijñānakala* or *jñānakala, mantra, mantreśvara, mantramaheśvara,* and Śiva. The first three realms, and thereby also the beings of these realms, belong to impure creation, and so to the stage of bondage. The last four realms and their respective beings belong to pure creation, and so no form of bondage whatsoever exists in these realms. The *pralayākala* is a being who remains in the state of dissolution (*laya*). As and when the universal dissolution occurs, the being of this type remains in the state of total stupor. As this state is equivalent to the state of rest, so the beings in this state too remain passive and unconscious.[22] From a larger perspective, the condition of dissolution denotes an embryonic state of consciousness, that is to say, consciousness which is in the process of being fertilized. It also denotes that the objective world too is not there for consciousness to cognize. In this state, therefore, the self neither knows anything nor has the capacity of doing anything.[23]

The next stage is that of a *sakala* being. A *sakala* being is the one who, after deep cosmic sleep (dissolution), has awakened. The being of this state is no more unconscious. Although conscious, he is still under the impact of impurities, and therefore tied to the peg of bondage. As the being of this type is fully awake, so the functioning of impurities is operative, and accordingly bondage in terms of cyclic becoming becomes actual. It is the *sakala* being who expresses actually the actual human condition.

The third state of the bound being is represented by the *vijñānakala.* The *vijñānakala*, although in bondage, is free from *kārma-mala,* but suffers from the root-impurity (*āṇava-mala*). This being, thus, is little higher than the above two types of beings. It is the root-impurity which is responsible in giving rise to an idividuality that is limited. As the individual being is limited, so he experiences both ontic and epistemic duality. It is the *āṇava-mala* which causes both the *kārma-mala* and the *māyīya-mala* to be. The *vijñānakala* state, in contrast to that of *sakala*, is highly purified, in that in the former state only the *kārma-mala* is operative, whereas in the latter one both the impurities are operative. The *vijñānakala* is a stage where the individual being stands on the threshold of liberation. As the individual of this stage has to cross the barrier of *māyā*, so he, upon the eradication of *āṇava-mala*, enters into the state of pure knowledge (*śuddhavidyā*), which belongs to pure creation. The self of this category, thus, is said to be above *māyā* but below *śuddhavidyā*.[24]

These three types of beings of impure creation correspond to the three strands of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. The being of the state of dissolution corresponds to the inert strand on account of it being unconscious, whereas the individual of the phenomenal realm corresponds to the passionate (*rajas*) strand. It is action that is the main feature of the *sakala* being. Insofar as the *vijñānakala* being is concerned, he corresponds to the good (*sattva*) strand. As he is of the nature of good, so he justifiably may be said to have reached a very high degree of spirituality.

Upon crossing the border from the realm of *vijñānakala* into that of *śuddhavidyā*, the individual thereby enters the realm of pure creation, and also into the zone of liberative freedom. The pure creation is characterized by four types of beings: Mantra, Mantreśvara, Mantramaheśvara, and Śiva. The first three types of beings correspond to the three categories of existence (*tattva*) of pure creation, which are *sadvidyā, īśvara, sadāśiva.* As *mantra* signifies ideation, so it denotes, in the context of pure creation, creative reflection which occurs within consciousness. At the metaphysical level, it means that creation is nothing but pure thought existing in consciousness. With regard to Paramaśiva it means that, while engaging in the activity of manifestation, there is only an idea of that which is manifestable. So *mantra, mantreśvara,* and *mantramaheśvara* explain hierarchically the stages of Paramaśiva's ideating activity of creation.[25] All the three categories are seen to be necessary in the act of creation. No creative act is possible without will (*icchā*), and so this aspect is denoted by the category of Sadāśiva, which is equivalent to the *mantramaheśvara* stage. Upon willing to create, one has to have an idea of what to create, which is expressed by the category of Īśvara, and is identical with the stage of *mantreśvara.* Finally, we come to the stage of execution of idea. It is at the stage of *mantra* which corresponds to the category of Sadvidyā. This division of being as well as of categories is the basis of the Trika cosmology.[26]

TYPES OF LIBERATION

It is upon ascending these various realms that an adept ultimately reaches his soteric goal of liberation, which is to realize the state of Śivahood. The one who reaches this soteric goal of liberation is termed a *jīvanmukta,* that is to say, liberated-while-alive. It is a liberation which the seeker enjoys while living a normal life in the world. Such a person is no more subject to the limitations or restrictions of the world, which means that he is no more in the grip of existential bondage of unfreedom. In epistemological terms a bound existence is one which is characterized both by epistemic and ontic difference, that is to say, one not only cognizes things as objects out there, but looks at them as being essentially different from consciousness. A *jīvanmukta,* while living in the world, has to reap the fruit of those actions which so far have not borne out fruit. Also he lives in the world to the extent he has to exhaust his *prārabdha-karma,* that is, *karma* that is yet to bear fruit.[27] Upon the completion of worldly journey, the liberated realizes perfect identity with the absolute I-consciousness, which is Śiva, and is accordingly referred to as a liberation that comes about upon disembodiment.[28] The *jīvanmukta,* in contrast to the *videha-mukta,* does not have the complete experience of omniscience or of omnipotence on account of the limitation of bodily existence. It is upon gaining *videha-mukti* that one totally merges in Śiva, and thereby has the experience of both omniscience and omnipotence.[29]

There is, however, a state of liberative experience which is different from, and higher to, the one which *jīvanmukti* embodies or represents, and this state is known as that of complete submergence (*samāveśa*) in the absolute I-consciousness. This liberative experience is not the result of a graduated practice, or of step by step ascension; rather the occurrence of this experience is sudden and spontaneous. While being conscious of his individuality, the adept at the same time experiences the transmutation of consciousness into that of absolute I-consciousness.[30] The impact of this experience is so powerful that the adept immediately recognizes his divine nature as being that of Śiva. In addition to having the recognitive experience of Śivahood, the adept also acquires miraculous powers (*siddhis*). At the end of the worldly journey, there are two courses of action open to the liberated: He may either prefer to be absorbed by the absolute I-consciousness, or may, like a Bhairava, prefer to be born again with the intention of extending a helping hand to those who are desirous of liberation.

In addition to the above three types of liberation, which are *jīvan-mukti, samāveśa-mukti,* and *videha-mukti*, there is an another type of liberation, which is known as that of *krama-mukti,* or a graduated liberation. It is a liberation which comes to be on account of divine grace. The measures of grace is dependent to what extent one is open to it. If grace is of slow measure, it means that it will take a prolonged effort at arriving at the soteric goal of liberation. If it is of medium measure, then the span of time for gaining liberation is not as much needed as is in the case of slow grace. The fall of grace (*śaktipāta*) can be of intense measure. In such a case liberation could result without any effort. Grace basically is the gift of God, and upon whom it falls, he is bound to enjoy the bliss of liberation.[31]

REFERENCES

1. See *Mālinīvijayatantra* for further information.
2. *TĀ*, 1.26.
3. *Sāṁkhyakārikā,* 20.
4. *TĀ*, 2.64-65.
5. Ibid., 3.64.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 12.105.
8. Ibid., 8.163-73; 13.116.
9. Ibid., 1.64.
10. Ibid., 1.66.
11. Ibid., 1.156.
12. *P.Sā.*, 48.
13. *TĀ*, 9.65-66.
14. *ĪPV*, 3.2.5.
15. *TAV*, 9.62.
16. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 2.3.5: *Bhinnavedaprathātraiva māyākhyam. . . .*
17. *TĀ*, 1.156: *Mokṣa hi nāma naivānyaḥ svarūpaprathanaṁ hi saḥ.*
18. *Ī.P.Kā.*, 2.3.17.
19. *Anuttarāṣṭikā*, 4: *Sarvādvaita padasya vismṛtanidheḥ prāptiḥ prakāśodayaḥ.*
20. Ibid., 46: *Ānando na hi vittamadhyamadvan naivaṅganāsaṅgavat.*
21. *P.Sā.*, 106.
22. *TĀ*, 10.129.
23. *TĀV*, 10.134.
24. Ibid., 9.91.
25. *TĀ*, 9.53-54.
26. Ibid., 9.51-52.

27. The concept of destined *karma* (*prārabdha-karma*) explains that the individual being has to reap the fruit of those past actions which have not fructified—and *jīvanmukta* is no exception to this rule.
28. *ĪPV,* 2.3.7.
29. Ibid.
30. *TĀ*, 1.137.
31. Ibid., 2.224-45.

CHAPTER 8

Means of Liberation

So far we have, particularly in the last chapter, discussed as to what, in the eyes of the Trika, is constitutive both of bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*mukti*). We came to know that, according to the Trika, it is concealment of essential nature of Śiva which gives rise to individual bondage. At the human level this bondage is caused by impurities. It is the removal of impurities which results in the revelation of essential nature, and thereby also in the negation of ignorance. As a result of removal of impurities, there occurs the transcendental experience of the Self, which reveals that the individual self is non-different from the Absolute or Paramaśiva. The question that may arise in the context of removal of impurities is this: How or in what way are impurities removed? The impurities, which are said to be three in number, cannot be removed by mere self-effort or by themselves. There has to be a soteric method or means which has the power of enabling the adept to reach the soteric goal of liberation by penetrating the layers of impurities, which obscure the actual nature of the Self.

SELF-EFFORT VERSUS GRACE

Before taking into consideration the Trika means of liberation, it will be appropriate at this juncture to find out as to whether liberation is the result simply of self-effort or is the outcome of divine grace. The concept of divine grace represents the spirituality of dependence upon the divine intervention. The divine intervention is sought because man finds himself incomplete and ill-equipped for the task of reaching the salvific goal. It is believed that God alone can lead man to his ultimate destiny. This line of thought concerning grace is mainly followed by such religions which are theistic in orientation. The non-theistic religions, particularly Jainism and Buddhism, are of the view that self-effort alone results in self-sanctification, and thereby in the realization of liberation. In such types of religions, which believe neither in God nor in soul, it is self-effort which counts the most, and which is given precedence over religious and dogmatic assertions. There are some Mahāyāna schools, particularly the Pure Land school, who have decried this self-assertive tendency within Buddhism. The Pure Land is of the view that salvation/liberation is possible only if we wholeheartedly depend upon the merciful grace of Amitābha Buddha. The general tone of Śramaṇic tradition, however, is that it is self-effort alone that would lead one to the soteric goal of enlightenment/liberation, and so there is no need to seek divine intervention from above.

The Brāhmaṇic tradition, in contrast to the Śramaṇic one, believes in both self-effort and divine grace as means of liberation. The Vedic or Brāhmaṇic tradition thinks that grace (*kṛpā, anugraha, prasāda, śaktipāta*) is as important as is self-effort in realizing both the transcendental (*alaukika*) and the worldly (*laukika*) goals: The former goal is characterized by the attainment of liberation/enlightenment, whereas the latter one is marked by the sensual and aesthetic enjoyment (*bhukti*). As both goals, according to the Trika, are legitimate, so accordingly self-effort by itself cannot reach the goal unless supported by divine grace. It is for this reason that Silburn has this to say concerning the Trika: "(The Trika) does not offer us a mystique of *yoga* but a mystique of *grace,* for everything is grace: Śiva does not appear as the bearer of grace, but as grace itself."[1] Śiva sends his grace upon his followers in the form of "the fall of his Energy" (*śaktipāta*).

The Trika thinks of grace as a free gift of God, which is not dependent upon one's merits or de-merits. As such grace is termed as being causeless and motiveless (*ahetuki*). If grace is a free gift of God, then the question arises as to why only few are showered with this gift and others are not? Is God selective in choosing upon whom grace should be showered? Does not this act of God of favouring some with grace and others not amount to the divine arbtrariness? According to the Trika, God does not at all favour some at the cost of others. He sends grace on those who deserve it, who seek it, who are open to it, or who seek the soteric goal of liberation. As a free gift, God showers grace upon those who surrender unto him and seek refuge in him.[2] The measure of grace that one receives is dependent upon the intensity of impurities. There are individuals who are overwhelmed by impurities, whereas in others the impact of impurities has become thin through the cultivation of religious practices or by surrendering unto the Lord. Most of us are in a state in which the impurities have not reached the point of ripening. The gradual process of ripening of impurities is called *malapāka.* Each individual experiences the impact of grace in accordance with the measure of intensity of impurities, that is, as to whether the impact of impurities has been thinned or not.

Since no cause can be assigned to grace, so, according to the Trika, it is God's playful nature that alone can be thought to be the cause of grace. Whatever God does, he does it spontaneously and out of his own free will. And so grace has to be seen as a free act of the Divine Will. This gracious activity has beeen accepted both in terms of worldly enjoyment (*bhukti*) and soteriological liberation.[3] Insofar as self-effort is concerned, it is not seen as being against grace. Whatever self-effort one may make for spiritual upliftment, it is seen to be the result of grace itself. If this be the case, then no opposition or clash is seen between self-effort and grace; rather they are seen to be complimenting each other. Self-effort fulfils its goal when seen as the result of grace itself. It is, therefore, grace which is the initial point of spiritual movement—this movement ultimately terminates in the realization of salvific liberation. Even the devotional attitude towards God is itself the result of God's grace. The moment God's grace falls upon the individual, that very moment he surrenders unto him. Thus the divine grace and the worship of God go together, one intensifying the other, and thereby enchancing each other.

It is the grace of God which directs the individual to a preceptor (*guru*) who points out the way of liberation. The teacher is seen as the embodiment of the divine, and so is given, for all practical purposes, the status of God. Upon receiving the necessary initiation from the preceptor, the adept then qualifies for discipleship. The preceptor, first of all, imparts the theoretical knowledge concerning the nature of Ultimate Reality. In addition to theoretical knowledge, which is based upon the scriptures, the preceptor also teaches the disciple the secrets of Śiva-yoga. It is through the practice of Śiva-yoga that the disciple is enabled to reach the goal of self-realization and in terms of which is achieved liberation. The preceptor also has the power of eradicating impurities of his disciple, thereby actualizing the process of purification. The process of purification is initiated by the preceptor through initiation (*dīkṣā*). It is the secret initiation which initiates the disciple into the realm that is sacred by getting him out from that which is profane. There are some individuals who do not have to go through any such process, nor are they in need of a preceptor. Such persons are spoken of as being born accomplished (*siddha*). God sends such persons, according to the Trika thinking, for the good of humanity. Moreover, he showers grace upon them which enables them to have a direct intuitive experience of Reality—and such a supersensuous experience is called *pratibhā*.[4] Even the author of the *Yogasūtras*, Patañjali, recognizes *pratibhā* as a means of liberation.[5] The individual who is bestowed with *pratibhā* is esoterically initiated by the non-terrific, or, should we say, benevolent power of God, and this power is called *aghora*.[6]

Fundamentally grace is said to be of two kinds, namely, initial grace and the grace that terminates in the attained goal. The first kind of grace leads an individual to the experience of the Self, whereas the second one bestows supernatural powers, and thereby enables one to have worldly enjoyment (*bhukti*). The first type of grace, thus, is spoken of as being transcendental (*parā*), whereas the second type is termed as being of relative nature (*aparā*).[7] The grace that is transcendental is said to be quick (*tīvra*) and effective, while the grace of relative nature has been classified into medium (*madhya*) and slow (*manda*). Such individuals are bestowed with medium grace who have keen interest in the attainment of supernatural powers (*siddhis*), and the slow grace is given to them who are desirous of liberation, but want to ascend the ladder of spirituality in a graduated manner. In contrast to the relative grace, the transcendental type of grace has been divided into quick (*tīvra*), medium (*madhya*), and slow (*manda*). They who are eligible for quick grace attain to the state of liberation immediately, and have to make no effort whatsoever for such a superior spiritual goal. They have spontaneous knowledge of the Absolute. They who have medium type of grace do not have as quick intuition of the Absolute as is the case with quick grace. The intuition they have concerning the Absolute is called *pratibhā*. The *pratibhā*-knowledge dispells ignorance without having the adept to resort to initiation.[8] The grace that is of slow type creates, first and foremost, desire for a right teacher in the heart of the adept.[9] It is for such an individual that the Lord incarnates himself as his teacher.[10] The preceptor, believed to be endowed with supernatural qualities, removes the dirt of impurities from the disciple.[11] Upon the removal of impurities, the disciple thereby is freed from the effect of past *karman*, and accordingly is enabled to have the recognitive experience of his Śivahood.

It is against this conceptual framework concerning grace and self-effort that we may take the Trika methods of liberation (*upāya*) into consideration, which, truly and effectively, reflect the authentic spirituality of effort and grace. It is the symbiotic union between effort and grace that the Trika has envisaged a framework, both philosophic and practical, whereby the methods of liberation are made use of. The methods of liberation would not by themselves lead the individual to the soteriological goal of liberation unless irrigated by the waters of grace. The soil thus prepared is seen fit for the launching of journey for ultimate autonomy from human bondage, which is characterized by finitude and absence, by birth and death. It is to get out of this process of continuous becoming that the ultimate state of constancy is sought, which is termed as the state of Śivahood. It is within this existential perspective that the Trika has envisaged the practical spiritual discipline (*sādhanā*) in such a manner as would terminate in the soteric goal of liberation. The spiritual goal (*upeya, sādhya*), thus, is itself reflected in the spiritual discipline which the adept undertakes.

The spiritual goal of a Trika adept is the realization of the Self, which is tantamount to saying of realizing one's ontic state as being Śiva. It is a goal in which the perceptual and conceptual dualities are transcended by realizing absolute unity with the absolute I-consciousness. The methods that have been envisaged for reaching this goal are both philosophic and practical. We shall, however, explain, before anything else, the philosophic method.

The Philosophic Method

The Trika thinkers have made use of a specific term, *pratyabhijñā*, to denote a form of knowledge whereby an individual is enabled of knowing one's essential nature. The term *pratyabhijñā* (recognition) does not simply mean to recognize that which one may have seen or known long ago. The term has, rather, wider implications. The term, within the Trika framework, has a specific meaning, which is: To recognize the identity of something that one may never have known or seen before. The term "recognition", therefore, implies a knowledge which concerns with the identity of one's own Self, or of someone else. We may, thus, say that recognition, for the Trika, signifies the knowledge of identity.

Recognition as knowledge of identity is different both from perception and memory, although both of them may have some role to play. In perception knowledge is not necessarily invloved. We perceive an object, but may not become aware of its identity. Recognition is, however, much more than perception. It is through recognition that we come to know the identity of the object. To become aware of the identity of the object means that we have the knowledge of the object. Recognition is also different from memory, although apart from memory we may not be able to recognize the object which we may have seen in the past. Memory is that mental activity by which we reproduce an event or a thing in the mind which we may have seen or observed in the past. Upon recollecting the event in the present, we never see it in actuality. We perceive it only mentally. In contrast to memory, recognition enables the individual to see the event or a thing in actuality. Abhinavagupta explains as to what recognition means by citing an example of a girl who is to be married to a person whom she has not seen. She has developed an attitude of love for the would-be husband whom she has not so far seen. It so happens that she unexpectedly meets him without knowing that he is the perosn whom she is going to marry. While encountering the person, she all of a sudden, without being told by anyone, realizes that he is the man to whom she is going to be married. The moment this awareness arises in her, she realizes that this man is not like any other person. This knowledge of identity is called recognition (*pratyabhijñā*).[12] Recognition, therefore, is viewed to be such a knowledge which authenticates the identity of the object of knowledge.

In the context of the Self how are we to know as to what is the actual nature of the Self? Although each one of us is aware of the Self in terms of day-to-day experiences, yet somehow we are never able to know as to what the real nature or identity of the Self is. We think of the Self as being limited and finite, or identify it with psychosomatic organism. This happens because we are unable to recognize the true identity of the Self. It is through the study of the scriptures that we come to know as to what the nature of the Self is. The dawning of the true knowledge of the Self is called recognition.[13]

RECOGNITION AND KNOWLEDGE

Now the question that may be asked in the context of recognition is this: Is recognition characterized by knowledge? Does the verbal knowledge of the self as being identical with Śiva terminate in soteriological freedom? In order to understand as to what the concept of recognition actually means, we will have to take into consideration the kinds of ignorance about which the Trika speaks. According to the Trika, there are two kinds of ignorance which correspond to two types of knowledge. Ignorance as finite knowledge is either intellectual (*bauddha*) or existential (*pauruṣa*).[14] The intellectual ignorance can be removed upon the acquirement, through the study of the scriptures, of appropriate knowledge that is conducive towards the realization of the soteric goal, which is freedom from bondage. This ignorance is said to be the manifestation of the absolute will (*savātantrya-śakti*) of the Lord. The function of this ignorance is to conceal the real nature of consciousness. As the cause of impurities, the intellectual ignorance thereby becomes the cause of countless rebirths.[15] The existential ignorance, on the other hand, envelops the entire being of the individual, and is said to be of spiritual nature.[16] It is characterized by an orientation in terms of which the self, which is unlimited and infinite, is experienced, in its empirical mode of existence, bound and unfree. In this manner ignorance, whatever be its form or expression, gives rise to the sense of duality, and accordingly the self is seen to be different from the Universal Self as well as from the world of thought and perception. It is the experience of duality which gives rise to the law of causal restriction, or, should we say, to a temporality that is characterized by succession.[17]

Since existential ignorance (*pauruṣa-ajñāna*) is of spiritual nature, and thereby the womb of bondage, so its removal or negation cannot be accomplished merely be intellectual knowledge (*bauddha-jñāna*). For the removal of this ignorance it is necessary to undergo initiation at the hands of a competent preceptor, which means that the initiate will have to cultivate a specific spiritual method which the preceptor may prescribe or impart.[18] As and when it is asserted that the soteriological goal of freedom is reached by following the path of knowledge, the intention is to explain that it is not mere intellectual knowledge that terminates in soteric freedom; rather it is the existential knowledge, which comes to be upon the removal of impurities, that enables the initiate to reach the ultimate goal of transcendental freedom. There is no doubt that intellectual knowedge helps the individual to realize the religious intention of freedom. The intellectual knowledge, thus, has no capacity of leading an individual independently to freedom, whereas the existential knowledge has this capacity and power.[19]

The intellectual ignorance basically expresses itself in terms of a knowledge that is characterized by mental concepts, which are unable to explain that which is Transcendent. It is a knowledge that is determinate, in that consciousness, to the exclusion of everything, is directed to a single object. Although the intellectual knowledge has its own limitations, it does not mean that it is useless or serves no purpose. The intellectual knowledge is a pre-requisite for understanding as to what the spiritual knowledge is all about, which means that one's mind must have clarity of thought and vision before making any attempt for the attainment of spiritual knowledge. That is said to be appropriate intellectual knowledge which emerges from the study of the sacred scriptures, and so is said to be of the nature of intuition.[20] There is the arising of intuitive knowledge as and when the limited ego melts away by having the intimation of Cosmic Being. The existential knowledge, however, comes to be upon transcending the dual structures of thought and of cognition, which is the nature of empiricality. It is a knowledge which shines forth by itself upon the removal of impurities.[21]

It is clear now that both forms of knowledge complement each other, and so must not be seen as being independent of each other. It, thus, is explicit that the recognitive knowledge is not just an another form of intellectual knowledge, although the intellectual input may be an essential component of it. It is a knowledge that discloses the true nature of the Self by removing the obscuring veils of impurity. Upon arriving at the summit of recognitive knowledge the individual undergoes a total inner transformation, in that he no more experiences himself as being limited, or different from Śiva, or from the world of which he is a part. The personality of such a person shines forth like the light of the sun, or like the sun upon the removal of clouds.[22] Further the recognitive knowledge is not merely a verbal or conceptual knowledge concerning the nature of Reality; rather it is a knowledge of intuitive experience itself. It is, thus, knowledge by acquaintance, and not a knowledge that is descriptive or interpretative.

THE CONTENT OF RECOGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE

If recognitive knowledge of the self is said to be identical with the removal of impurities, then why should it be at all referred to as knowledge? Impurity, according to the Trika, is not something of material nature. It is of the nature of ignorance (*a-jñāna*), and that which is incomplete knowledge can be negated by that which is of the nature of perfect knowledge. It is for this reason that recognition is said to be one with knowledge. Moreover, recognition is of the nature of awakening (*prabuddha*), which in mystical terms means to ascend to the higher levels of awareness. For the Trika, thus, knowledge is not a mere intellectual grasp of objective entities that are outside of consciousness; rather it is viewed as being of the nature of illumination. As illumination, the recognitive knowledge enables the seeker to realize that he is one with the All, which, within the Trika context, denotes the perfect knowledge of I-consciousness (*pūrṇāhantā*). It amounts to saying that in and through recognitive knowledge the seeker comes to know intuitively that he is the all-pervasive Self (*pūrṇāhaṁ, Śiva*).

Upon realizing the unity with the All (*sarvātmā*), the yogī thereby discovers everyone within, which simultaneously also means that the self is in everything. In this manner is experienced the cosmic presence of Being. It is a presence that is both ontic and epistemic. How are we to grasp, it may asked, this unity of Being at a level which is innate to humanity? It is in terms of love that we experience, at its best, as to what it means to be one. It is in the embrace of love in which the false egoity melts away or dissolves in the Cosmic Ocean of oneness. Recognitive awareness, therefore, may be spoken of as a knowledge which, like love, affirms the Upaniṣadic assertion concerning the unity of Being.[23]

The recognitive knowledge of unity is immediate and is not dependent upon any extenal mediation. It is a knowledge in which both the subject and the object, the knower and the known are ontically one. The recognitive knowledge concerning the self is not of the kind which arises when the subject and obejct relate to each other, or when consciousness intentionally goes outside to the obejct. One does not know the self in the manner a table or a chair is known. Rather the recognition concerning the self may be linked to the self-illumination (*svayam-prakāśa*) of the sun or, should we say, it is the light of the self which illumines itself, and thereby reveals itself as to what it is.

The question that arises at this juncture is this: What is the content of recognitive knowledge? The content of the recognitive knowledge obviously is the self, and that is why this knowledge is also referred to as self-knowledge (*ātma-pratyabhijñā*). Upon gaining the recognitive knowledge of the self, the yogī thereby comes to know that the world is a projection of the self, which means that all that is manifest is but an appearance of the Absolute. The knowledge of the world as being appearance (*ābhāsa*) means that whatever appears to the senses or consciousness is not ultimately real, which, prior to this knowledge, was thought to be so. In this manner the mistaken knowledge, or what is called ignorance, is completely negated. Upon gaining the knowledge of the self, the yogī becomes the knower of Reality, and is accordingly called the seer (*tattva-draṣṭā*).

The knowledge of the self, once realized, does not depend for its affirmation on anything. It is a knowledge that is self-evident, and is not an acquired one, which is the case with all forms of intellectual knowledge. Accordingly is the recognitive knowledge spoken of as being intuitive (*pratibhā*) in nature. This intuitive knowledge shines forth spontaneously and by itself. Consciousness attains total transparency upon the removal of veils of obscuration, that is, defilements. The luminous light of consciousness spreads itself out everywhere. And in whom this light of the self remains no more concealed—such a person is truly called a knower (*jñānī*), which, within the Indian context, means that the person not only has the knowledge of ethics that is constitutive of righteous living, but lives a life that is righteous and pure. To lead a sound ethical life means to live a life of love—and love flows forth only from a person in whom the sense of difference or of egoity exists no more. Truly is such a person spoken of as the enlightened one.

The realization of the self as being the sole real does not mean that one has possessed something which one did not have prior to this realization. Not at all! The recognitive knowledge simply means to uncover the self that had remained concealed on account of impurities or *māyā*.[24] We are unable to recognize the self on account of its hiddenness, and this hiddenness of the self is experienced as the absence of God (*Deus absconditus*). The recognitive knowledge is, thus, seen as a process whereby we are enabled to discover or uncover (*āviṣkaraṇa*) the self.[25] What it means in relation to the mystical experience of the self is this: It is the experience of going back to our primordial condition, which, in yogic terms, is called "the turning of our eyes inward."[26]

The fundamental feature of recognitive knowledge is the realization of the self as being non-different from the Cosmic Consciousness, which is equivalent to saying: I am Śiva. This consmicization of the self denotes simultaneously the disappearance of the limited self. To the extent there is the sense of egoity within, to that extent experience of difference occurs. On account of ego we experience every kind of limitation. The ego, in a word, may be said to be the source of division or differentiation. It is in and through the principle of ego that the knowledge of oneself or of entitites outside is gained by employing the method of comparison and contrast. Whatever empirical knowledge we have, it is the result of analysis, and in terms of which the subject-object dualism is given rise to. Upon the dissolution of the ego, however, this subject-object dualism disappears in the matrix of unity.

The egolessness, which is gained upon realizing the recognitive knowledge, must not be taken to mean as the death of the self, or a tendency that has suicidal implications. It simply means the disappearance of that form of self which is limited and unfree, the self which sets things apart from each other by putting them in subject-object opposition. The death of the limited self denotes the disappearance of false individuality. What disapears is the empirical mode of name-and-form, and not the actual substance, which is the self. It is the wave which disappears, and not the water or the ocean. It is the same substance, water, which is found both in the wave and the ocean. To the extent wave exists, to that extent it thinks of itself as an independent entity, and so remains separate from the ocean. Upon the disappearance of the wave, there remains the ocean. Likewise upon the disappearance of the ego, there remains the Cosmic Self, which is the actual substratum of the empirical self or of that which is a create. What it actually means is this: Upon the death of the limited self, there remains the real self, which is Śiva. The limited self, according to the Trika, is already, prior to realization, identical with Śiva. It is on account of ignorance that the actual self remains hidden, and we think of the false self to be real. There is, thus, no attainment of that which was not there. What actually happens is the unveiling of the self, and thereby allowing its nature to shine forth, which is but the luminosity of consciousness. The ladder to perfect realization is characterized by a hierarchy of seven steps or grades. The stages of spiritual ascension are marked by to what extent impurities have been thinned. The spiritual progress is marked by the measure of purity, and accordingly is spiritual progress named. There are seven steps that one has to ascend, and they are Pralayākala, Sakala, Vijñānakala, Mantra, Mantreśvara, Mantramaheśvara, and Śiva. All the seven steps collectively are called the seven knowers (*sapta-pramātā*). It is at the spiritual level of Śiva where full realization of ontic identity with Śiva is realized, and the one who reaches this stage of spiritual evolution is spoken of as the knower of Śiva (*Śiva-pramātā*). In this manner the spiritual goal of liberation is reached, and thereby the Trika soteriological intent is fulfilled, which is to know oneself as Śiva.

THE PRACTICAL MEANS

The purpose of the practical means (*upāya*) is the same which is of the philosophic means. The goal (*sādhya*) is to arrive at the soteriological freedom, which is characterized by freedom from the bondage of becoming and in terms of which perfect unity of Being, within and without, is experienced. The methods of practical discipline are said to be three in number, and they are the Individual Way (*āṇava-upāya*), the Way of Energy (*śākta-upāya*), and the Way of Śiva (*śāmbhava-upāya*). There is a fourth method, which is no method at all, and is accordingly called the Null Way (*anupāya*). This method is said to be no-method on account it being identical with the Transcendent—and the Transcendent, being beyond the dualities of the world, is free from all forms of activity. As any discipline invloves action, so the *anupāya*, in contrast to the other methods, is free from action, and accordingly is termed as the Null Way. Also sometimes the Way of Śiva and the Null Way are seen to be identical, as in neither of them action is involved.[27]

The methods of spiritual discipline, broadly speaking, have been categorized as being either inferior or superior. The first two methods —the Individual Way and the Way of Energy—are said to be of inferior quality. Why? Because they do not directly terminate in self-realization, but, through a lot of effort, prepare the adept for the ultimate soteriological experience of unity and freedom. The last two methods—the Way of Śiva and the Null Way—are considered as being of superior quality. Why? Because they directly terminate in the soteric freedom. Moreover, these two methods are totally free from religious rituals as well as from yogic discipline of concentration. The religious rituals and the yogic concentration are the essential components of the first two methods.

The order of the methods of liberations is reverse to the order of creational manifestation. The order of creational manifestation begins from the non-dual Absolute, and ultimately terminates in the gross phenomenal diversity. The phenomenal manifestation occurs in terms of the arc of descent. The spiritual discipline, in contrast to the order of manifestation, begins from the realm of phenomenal diversity, and ultimately ends up in the realization of the non-dual Absolute. The process of manifestation is that of expansion (*vikāsa, unmeṣa*), whereas that of spiritual discipline is that of withdrawal or dissolution (*laya, nimeṣa, saṁkoca*). It means that the process of liberation takes place in reverse order to that of manifestation.

The Trika asserts that the so-called manifest universe is nothing but the self-projection or reflection of the Absolute. It means that the universe is identical with Śiva in the same way as image in a mirror is one with the reflected. The order of creational manifestation occurs in this manner: *ānanda* (bliss), *icchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge), and *kriyā* (action). These four aspects of the Absolute correspond to the four stages of creational manifestation, which are the Transcendent (*parā*), the Visionary (*paśyanti*), the Middle (*madhymā*), and the Gross (*vaikharī*). The four powers of the Absolute and the four creational stages are compared to the four stages of consciousness of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and *turīya*. In terms of yogic praxis the four states of consciousness also represent the four states of immersion. It is in this context of comparison that the first two methods are spoken of as that of action (*kriyā*) and knowledge (*jñāna*),[28] whereas the last two are equated with will (*icchā*) and bliss (*ānanda*).

THE INDIVIDUAL WAY

The Individual Way or the *āṇava-upāya* is identified with action, and so represents the gross manifestational stage. In yogic terms, it represents the waking state. Insofar as the power of the Lord is concerned, *kriyā* represents the Śuddhavidyā category. As this method is identified with action, so this very appallation tells us as to the nature and content of the method, which is to depend upon the external aids like religious worship, the use of rituals and sacred formulas (*mantras*). The external aids are made use of for the purpose of enhancing one's spirituality.[29] It amounts to saying that this method is dependent upon that which is either physical or mental. It is so because this method exists in the world of difference, or, should we say, this method is suitable for such a person who operates within the realm of subject-object duality.[30] As the method is circumscribed by the physical limitations, so it is seen to be identical with the limited human being (*nara*) who, on account of an embodied existence, suffers from the limitation of space-time,[31] and accordingly the method also is spoken of as the human method (*nara-upāya*), or the method of difference (*bheda-upāya*).

As the method reflects that which is of physical nature or that which is action-oriented, so the kind of yoga that is made use of in this method is either physical or exertional. The type of yogic discipline that is made use of in this method is basically of Haṭhayoga type. It is a yoga of the body. The use of the bodily postures (*āsanas*) and of regulated breathing (*prāṇāyāma*) are very prominent in this method. Insofar as the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī is concerned, it is the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* which this method attempts to arouse. The *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* is identical with the life-force that sustains and keeps the body alive. It is through the method of breathing and concentration (*dhyāna*) that the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* is awakened. Whatever be the mode of external worship, it becomes operative only when it derives its strength from the inner self. External worship is meaningless unless steeped in consciousness, and this point is made obvious when Abhinavagupta writes: "Just as without virility a man is impotent, and without life the body is dead, so is the external worship (without inner feeling)."[32]

The practitioner of this method or way may be said to be a beginner insofar as spirituality is concerned. He is still attached to the earthly form of existence, and has not yet broken the bonds that bind him to the bondage of *saṁsāra*. So the divine grace that the adept of this way receives is of feeble nature. It is upon numerous rebirths that the adept of this way attains to a state of mind whereby he cuts asunder all the bonds of attachment. Upon the destruction of the bonds of attachment the adept ultimately succeeds in realizing his salvific identity with Śiva. As the grace of this path is of feeble nature, so it, the grace, has to be supplemented by such yogic exercises which will sharpen the introversion of consciousness. Also such methods of worship may be used which will intensify the devotional attitude of the adept towards God. Whatever exercises an adept may undertake, he has to perform them under the guidance of a preceptor (*guru*).[33] The spiritual goal of this path is to arrive at such an inward state whereby the dualized forms of thought are purified, and accordingly inner quietude is restored.[34]

The first requirement of this path is that of a spiritual preceptor. It is the *sine qua non* or the fundamental pre-requisite of the Individual Way. The ultimate preceptor, according to the Trika, is Śiva himself, but he comes to the aid of the adept in human form. The human preceptor, thus, is seen to be none other than Śiva himself. The distinction between the disciple and the preceptor, which exists prior to self-realization, disappears upon gaining insight into the real nature of Reality. The disciple, while indentifying himself with his preceptor during the course of meditation, unltimately arrives at such a meditative stage whereby he, with ease, is able to identify himself with Śiva. A true preceptor is said to be the one who has the power of conferring consecration (*abhiṣeka*), in contrast to initiation (*dīkṣā*), upon the disciple. Initiation is seen as the initial spiritual movement whereby the disciple is empowered with certain divine powers through yogic exercises and rituals. Prior to initiation, the preceptor engages in certain purificatory rites with the intention of establishing a series of identifications which, when translated into acutal acts, would mean that the preceptor, before anything else, brings about esoterically identification between himself and the disciple, and thereby establishes the disciple in the path which the preceptor thinks to be appropriate. Once identification between the preceptor, who is the visible sign of Śiva on earth, the disciple and the universe is established esoterically, there then occurs the illumination of non-duality, which is the ultimate soteric goal of the Trika adept. Insofar as consecration is concerned, it is performed by the preceptor when he not only empowers the disciple with illumination, but confers upon him the powers of omniscience and omnipotence, which denote the state of liberation.

Next to the preceptor the most important item is the use of such yogic exercises which enable the adept to obtain complete introversion of consciousness. The aim of the yogic exercises is, first and foremost, to activate the cosmic forces within the body. The Trika believes that the body is the microcosmic representation of that which is macrocosmic, and so whatever there is in the cosmos, is already existing as a potentiality within the human body. This principle of macro-micro parallelism is best foreshadowed in the *Śivasūtara* when it is said: "As in the Yogī's body, so also elsewhere."[35] The direct implication of this assertion is this: The cosmic forces parallel the biological forces within the body, and upon the activation of these forces through the cosmic forces within the body, the adept thereby is enabled to overcome the veiling powers of ignorance, and subsequently has the recognitive experience of identity with the Absolute.

Insofar as the yogic practices are concerned, they are said to be of two types: external and internal. The external yogic exercises consist of the bodily postures (*āsanas*), breathing control (*prāṇāyāma*), recitation of mystic syllables (*mantras*), etc. These yogic exercises are mainly cultivated by such adepts who follow the Individual Way. The internal yogic exercises, on the other hand, are mental in nature, like concentration on an object or concept, leading ultimately to the state of deep absorption or introversion. Upon the attainment of complete introversion of consciousness there simultaneously occurs total withdrawal from all that is external to consciousness. Subsequently consciousness sinks into its own repose (*viśrānti*) which, while cultivating the Way of Energy (*śākta-upāya*), terminates in perfect absorption (*samāveśa*) in Śiva.

As the aim is to arrive at a state of consciousness whereby dualized forms of thought and cognition are appeased, so the purpose of the Individual Way is to have the experience of quietude at the empirical level of existence. The repose of absorption comes to be by following the higher ways or methods. As to how to arrive at the state in which thought is completely pacified is thoroughly analyzed in the *Vijñāna-bhairava.*[36] In following the Individual Way the adept prepares himself for higher and superior spiritual experiences by stepping into the Way of Energy and, finally, into the Way of Śiva. In this manner he travels the path of spirituality, leading him to the state of absorption and in terms of which everything is seen as Śiva and Śiva as everything.

THE WAY OF ENERGY

The Way of Energy (*śāktopāya*) is the second method of liberation prescribed by the Trika. The aim of this method is to enable the aspirant, through yogic exercises, to rise above the knowledge of duality, which is the characteristic feature of the limited self. As the purpose is to transcend the dualized structures of thought, so this method is also spoken of as the Way of Knowledge (*jñāna-upāya*), and knowledge is one of the powers of Śiva. This method is *in toto* mental, which means that the adept is asked to contemplate an idea with the intention of appropriating it.[37] As the adept has neither to articulate any sacred sound (*uccāra*) nor to engage in bodily yogic exercises, so the method is free from such exercises which are the bane of the Individual Way.[38]

The mental reflection (*vimarśa*) of the Way of Energy is not as spontaneous as is the case with the Way of Śiva. It is deliberate (*vikalpātmaka*), and so the exercise of will (*icchā-saṅkalpa*) as well as of effort (*adhyavasāya*) are essential ingredients of this path.[39] Although effort is essential to this method, yet this effort ultimately transforms itself into no-effort. Since the goal of the method is to arrive at such a spiritual state whereby Reality is experienced in terms of unity-in-diversity (*bhedābheda*), so the focus is upon mental concentration. As mental activity pertains to ego, so there is a sense of egoity (*abhimān*) in what one does or thinks.[40] The one who cultivates the Way of Energy is enabled to arouse the Kuṇḍalinī of Sound (*nāda-kuṇḍalinī*), which functions as the source of thinking. Human mind suffers from the fetters of bondage to the extent it erroneously thinks itself to be bound. It is the purpose of the Way of Energy to transcend the erroneous forms of thought, and thereby allow the mind to determine right thinking concerning the essential nature of the self. Thus whatever is of mental nature falls within the realm of the Way of Energy—be it the mental recitation of a sacred formula or a sacred name (*japa*), or meditation (*dhyāna*), or contemplation (*bhāvanā*), or concentration (*ekāgrata*). The difference between the Individual Way and the Way of Energy lies in this: The former Way cultivates the Yoga of Body, whereas the latter one cultivates the Yoga of Mind.

The Way of Energy is generally cultivated by such an adept who looks at Reality as being of the nature of pure Energy (*śakti*) and adheres to the philosophical framework of Gradation School (*kramavāda*). As the Way of Energy lays much emphasis upon knowledge (*jñāna*), so the adept of this path is expected to overcome ignorance through a knowledge that is characterized by creative resasoning (*bhāvanā*).[41] It is on account of intense meditation that macro-micro identity is realized, or, should we say, the self is seen as being identical with the universe.[42] As this Way, for all practical purposes, concentrates upon the mental activities of an individual, so it accordingly engages in such psychological exercises whereby complete introversion of consciousness is effected and in terms of which immersion or submergence in the Divine is experienced. With the intensification of introversion of consciousness comes the experience of complete absorption in the Absolute.

The Way of Energy serves as a point of transition between the inferior and superior Ways of Liberation. As such, this Way is seen as being more subtle and refined than the Individual Way, in that it leads the adept to his goal in a shorter period of time. As in this Way no physical or external effort is involved, so it concentrates upon human emotions like the love of God, even anger and passion. The adept who cultivates this path has the experience of inner quietude, absorption, and undifferentiated awareness.

The adept arrives at the state of repose when he abandons his mental concentration upon physical objects that are outside of consciousness. He develops, instead, a mystical orientation within whereby mind is stabilized. Upon the stability of mind, the adept focuses his attention upon the emergent Energy, which is considered, from an external standpoint, as the manifest universe. In this manner the adept effortlessly comes in contact with the undifferentiated Energy, and thereby is enabled to attain to the state of complete rest, which is free from mental agitations (*kṣobha*).

As a result of mental repose the adept develops the capacity of being absorbed in the awakened Energy (Kuṇḍalinī). This absorption in the undifferentiated Energy comes to be on acount of the destruction of the structures of limitation, which is the mark of individuality. Upon the disappearance of individuality comes into being the experience of the "void" (*śūnya*), which is equivalent to freedom. Freedom is linked to the experience of the void on account of the latter being, like space, free from impediments. This experience of the void (*nirvikalpa*) does not, however, last for long, but is of momentary nature. Subsequently the adept unifies his entire being in the repose of undifferentiated awareness, which, although being of momentary duration, leaves its impressions. When the yogī repeats the experience again and again, he thereby attains to the "tremendous state of Bhairava." Although the adept of this path may not be able to transcend completely the conceptualized aspect of existence, yet there comes into being the experience of depth in terms of which conflicts of life are resolved. In order to grasp these experiences, we will need to give a brief description of the "mystical centres" (*cakras*) in the context of the arousal of Energy (Kuṇḍalinī).

The mystical centres: The esoteric system of religious thought, as encapsulated by Tantrism and as represented by the Trika, is of the view that the human body, at the microcosmic level, represents the macrocosm. Thus every effort is made at cosmicizing the body, so that the latent cosmic forces within it are actualized. The adept, while following the inferior Way of the Individual, realizes the activation of cosmic forces within the body through the yogic techniques of concentration as well as through the ritual worship and the recitation of the sacred formulas. Also the adept experiences the cosmic transcendence by unifying the opposites, which, at the empirical level of existence, are seen as contraries. Upon the unification of the opposites the adept has the experience of the arousal of Energy (Kuṇḍalinī), which, prior to arousal, remains in the state of slumber at the base of the rectum, called the root-*cakra* (*mūlādhāra-cakra*). The Kuṇḍalinī is the Energy of Śiva which, upon the creational manifestation, becomes individuated, and so suffers from the limitations of atomization. The Kuṇḍalinī remains in this atomic state to the extent the individual being leads an unawakened existence. The Kuṇḍalinī, at the human level, is seen as the symbol of the Cosmic Energy which, on account of manifestation, is differentiated. At the level of religious praxis the Kuṇḍalinī is the Energy of Śiva, and so accordingly is considered as the consort of Śiva. It is, thus, the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti, who give rise to that which is phenomenal.

The yogī, while arousing the Kuṇḍalinī from the state of slumber, has the experience both of creational manifestation and resorption, which is linked to the opening (*unmeṣa*) and the closing (*nimeṣa*) of eyes of Śiva. It is through the use of the yogic techniques that the Kuṇḍalinī is aroused, and thereby is made to ascend along the mystical vein, called *suṣumnā,* to the top of the head, called the *sahasrāra* or *brahmarandhra.* The *sahasrāra* is believed to be the abode of Śiva. It is at this centre where the Kuṇḍalinī submerges in the absolute Śiva-consciousness. While ascending the *suṣumnā,* the Kuṇḍalinī on the way penetrates a number of mystical centres (*cakras*), which are located along the spinal column.[43]

The mystical centres are said to be seven in number, and they are the *mūlādhāra,* the *svādhiṣṭhāna,* the *maṇipura,* the *anāhata,* the *viśuddha,* the *ājñā,* and the *sahasrāra*. The root-*cakra* (*mūlādhāra*) is located at the base of the rectum and the genitals. It is at this centre where the Kuṇḍalinī is located. While residing in the state of slumber at the root-*cakra*, She thereby blocks access to the *suṣumnā-nāḍī*, or the Gracious Vein. This center represents the element earth.[44] Next centre, which is above the root-*cakra*, is the *svādhiṣṭhāna*, or the Own Abode. This centre is located at the base of the sexual organ. The element this centre represents is that of water.[45] The third mystical centre is called the Jewelled City (*maṇipura*). It is located in the region of the navel. It is the symbol of fire. The fourth centre is called the Unstruck Sound (*anāhata*). Its location is said to be in the region of the heart, and so is also called the *hṛt-cakra*, or Heart Centre. It represents the element air. The fifth centre is called the Immaculate (*viśuddha*), and lies at the base of the throat. It represents the element ether. The sixth is called the Command (*ājñā*), and is located between the two eyebrows, which is also the seat of the mystical third eye. As such the centre is thought to be the seat of the cognitive faculty of Śiva. Lastly, we have the thousand-petalled centre (*sahasrāra-cakra*). This centre is said to be on the top of the head and is considered to be the Abode of Śiva.[46] As the terminus of the cavity of Brahmā (*brahmarandhra*), it has accordingly been identified with the central vein called *suṣumnā*. It is at this place where the Kuṇḍalinī, after arousal, ends her journey upon getting unified with Śiva. The Kuṇḍalinī reaches the Abode of Śiva only upon piercing the six mystical centres which lie along the Central Vein. As the *sahasrāra* does not belong to the body, but has a transcendent dimension, so the *tāntrikas* always speak only of six mystical centres.[47] The yogī realizes complete transcendence once the Kuṇḍalinī merges in the Supreme Consciousness, which is Śiva—and the merger of the two, Śiva and Śakti, results in the mystical realization of being one with all.

The ritualized sex: There are some adepts who, while following the Way of Energy, make use of sex ritually with the intention of transcending the biological appetites of the body. Also sexuality is made use of to explain the cosmic manifestation. It is believed that the Absolute, by bifurcating itself into the Divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti, allows the emission of the universe to take place in the same manner as would happen when the semen is implanted in the womb, or when the seed is sown in the earth. It is the cosmic manifestation as well as its withdrawal that is enacted ritually when the adept, in the presence of the preceptor, engages in the sexual act.

Insofar as the ritualized sex is concerned, it is said to be of three types, namely, left-hand (*vāmācāra*), right-hand (*dakṣiṇācāra*), and the familiac (*kulācāra*). It is in the first and third type of *tāntrika* denominations in which the Five Ms are made use of. The Five Ms are meat (*māṁsa*), fish (*matsya*), liquor (*madirā*), fried beans (*mudrā*), and the sexual intercourse (*maithuna*). Each of the item begins with the letter *m*,[48] and so accordingly are spoken of as the Five Ms (*pañca-makāras*). Insofar as the right-hand school is concerned, it makes use of the forbidden items symbolically.

The intention of the ritualized sex is said to be twofold: It is to attain to the state of absolute unity by effecting ritually union between Śiva and Śakti, which at the existential level is experienced as the unity of male and female in terms of the sexual bliss. Also one of the means of penetrating the Heart is through sexual agitation (*śaktikṣobha*)—and this is the second reason as to why the adept of the Way of Energy engages in ritual sex. When man and woman engage in a sexual intercourse, there occurs agitation in terms of which the bliss of Energy is experienced. And this point is explained thus:

> The excitement of union with Energy brings about her possession. The joy of the reality of the Brahman is a reality abiding in oneself.[49]

Insofar as the sexual intercourse is seen as a means of having the foretaste of the transcendental bliss, the adept, while engaging in the sexual act, gets absorbed in the Familiac Engery (*kulāveśa*),[50] which is equivalent to saying that the absorption is of such intense nature that the object is completely abandoned, and it is the image that alone remains. The absent object, which in our case is the woman, is remembered to such an extent that it intensifies the principle of energy within the adept, and so he accordingly has the joyful experience which is explained in such ecstatic language as the following:

> Goddess, the intense recalling to mind the pleasure a woman has given with her tongue-play and caresses, produces a torrent of joy, even if the energy (that is, woman) is absent.[51]

There are other means, besides the sexual one, of giving rise to the joyful experiences in the region of the heart, and one of them is that of excitation of the nerves. It is believed that one experiences great relaxation of nerves when the object is completely abandoned and only the subject is allowed to remain.[52] Consequently the senses are appeased and thereby are refined, so that they, in the state of wakefulness, are made to overflow with joy. When the senses are in the state of joy, all forms of agitation cease to be, and thereby relaxation is experienced at its best.

Whether it be ritual sex or some other method, the aim is always to overcome the unpleasant experiences of life in the world. While making use of the forbidden ingredients, the Trika makes use of them in such a manner as would not result in permissiveness. It is only the heroic (*vīra*) type of adept who is allowed to engage in ritual sex, whereas the ordinary people (*paśu*) and divine beings (*daivī*) are debarred from engaging in such activities. The ordinary people, if allowed, would engage in ritual sex for the purpose of sensual pleasure, whereas the beings of divine temper need not enter into such a kind of activity. It is for this purpose that the *tāntrikas* have classified beings into three types: the ordinary, the heroic, and the divine. It is only the heroic who has the power and will to enter into ritual sex for the purpose of elevating himself spiritually.

Further it should be taken note of that joy, within the Trika, is not considered to be physical, although the physical delight may tell us as to what the nature of transcendent joy would be. For the Trika hero sexual joy is the bliss that emerges when the limited individuality is transcended. So what it means is this: We cannot think of the spiritual joy apart from the physical. Although the physical joy may be the basis of spiritual joy, yet it is not an end in itself. The goal is to experience the bliss of spiritual joy.[53] When the *tāntrika* couple engage in the sexual act, both of them are seen as the embodiment of the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti. When the sexual intercourse is performed within this framework, then it has to be seen as "the true sexual union . . . all other unions represent only carnal relations with women."[54]

The sexual rite, which is conducted in secret, has two parts: The preparatory one and the actual performance of the sexual act. In the preparatory part of the ritual it is the male counterpart who usually undergoes the ritual purification. The spot where the ritual is conducted is purified by burning incense and by uttering appropriate sacred formulas (*mantras*). The purpose of the purificatory rite is to transcend the realm of the profane, which means the couple will be conducting their sexual act within the realm of the sacred. It also means that the couple will be entirely free from the carnal desires and drives.[55] Once the spot, where the sexual intercourse is to be conducted, is purified, the adept thereupon purifies, through the process of consecration, his own body and mind by identifying himself with Bhairava, which is an aspect of Śiva. The process of identification is carried out through the techniques of yoga and *mantra*. It is through self-purification that the adept is enabled to enter into the sacred space where the sexual act is to be conducted. Also the adept, before entering into the sexual act, has to arouse the Kuṇḍalinī that lies dormant in the *mūlādhāra-cakra.*[56]

The second part of the ritual is the most secret one, as it is in this part of the ritual where the consort, who represents Śakti, is introduced. This part of the ritual begins with the worship of the couple, whereas the preceptor sits in the middle of the ritual circle. Such sacred formulas are recited as would bestow upon the consort the status of the Goddess. Insofar as the male partner is concerned, he represents Śiva concretely and visibly. It is by identifying the couple as Śiva and Śakti that the sexual act as a means of effecting perfect union between Bhairava and the Goddess is accomplished.[57]

The adept, before entering into the sexual act, indentifies himself with Śiva or Bhairava, thereby giving rise within himself to a consciousness that is no more human. Being in the state of Śivahood, the adept mentally worships the couch upon which the sexual act is to be performed. He also bathes his consort as well as worships her with incense and flowers, thereby preparing her for the final act. In this manner an inner disposition for union is given rise to, which ultimately results in the actual sexual intercourse, and in terms of which the adept "abandons his semen."[58]

The Trika thinks that it is not morally reprehensible to engage in the sexual act with a woman who is not one's wife for the higher spiritual purposes. It is the firm belief of the *tāntrikas* that Energy is equally present in both the forbidden and non-forbidden food as well as in acts that are considered either morally wrong or right. It is so because the entire manifest world is nothing but the manifest condition of Śiva itself, and Śiva does it through his Energy or Śakti. Moreover, delight is said to be the innate nature of the self. As the beginning and the end of every sexual act is permeated with the flavour of joy, so the repose that emerges on account of this joy cannot be seen apart from the self. It pertains to the self.[59] The adept who, through the process of ritual, has attained union with Bhairava, is no more influenced by the ethical notions of right and wrong. Such dualistic notions exist to the extent one is under the influence of ignorance. Upon transcending dualistic structures of thought, the adept sees everything to be Śiva. As the adept of the Way of Energy has attained to the state of a hero, so for him "everything is Śiva, all is pure."[60] In transcending the moral dualism of good and evil, the adept thereby frees himself from all forms of differentiation—and this point is clearly brought out in the *Mahārthamañjarī* in the following manner:

> Abandoning themselves to the delight of Great Banquet, where they drink the intoxicating quintessence of nectar from the pots of undifferentiated Energy—the revelers make bold to masticate the sprouts of differentiating concepts.[61]

It is quite explicit by now that the *tāntrikas* make use of ritual sex not for self-gratification, but for higher purposes, which is to overcome sexual urges through the medium of sex itself. Since no lust is involved, sexuality thereby is sanctified. It is in the context of sanctified sexuality that the couple engage in the sexual act. Tantrism, in contrast to the life-negating religions who believe in the renunciation of sexuality, thinks that such an attitude is defeatistic. Tantrism further believes that, while delighting in the joy of life in the world, one can reach the soteric goal of liberation in and through the world, and not by abandoning it. Pleasure, thus, is seen as an authentic and genuine means of self-realization. It is therefore the aim of the Way of Energy to bring about union between the physical and the spiritual, or, should we say, between *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa.*

THE WAY OF ŚIVA

The third method is called the Way of Śiva (*śāmbhava-upāya*). The method is also spoken of as that of Will (*icchā*), which is one of the powers of Śiva.[62] The method is so termed because Śiva allows knowledge to emerge merely by willing it. The method is characterized by a kind visualization in terms of which the universal manifestation is seen as the projection of the Universal Consciousness. It amounts to saying that the adept, through deep interiorization of consciousness, arrives at a level of experience whereby he experiences the entire universe existing within consciousness. In this manner duality that is experienced between consciousness and the world is done away with when the world is recognized as being the projection of consciousness. The Way of Śiva, thus, is a method whose goal is to enable the adept to realize total fusion between the macrocosm and the microcosm, between the Universal Self and the individual self, between *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa.*[63] This experience of non-duality, in theological terms, is explained thus:

> He is the Lord of the universe (*viśveśvara*) (and) in whose consciousness this entire world of difference appears as reflection.[64]

The adept who follows the Way of Śiva looks at the experience of unity from three perspectives, which are: "All this (i.e., the universe) has emanated from me" (*matta evoditam-idaṁ*); "All this is reflected within me" (*mayyeva-pratibimbitam*); and "It is non-different from me" (*madabhinamidaṁ*).[65] This experience of non-duality does not emerge on account of deliberate thinking or effort. The experience is not the result of repeating again and again that the self and the world are non-different. The experience emerges spontaneously and by itself. It is the result of grace. The Way of Śiva is said to be identical with the divine will not because will plays an important role in this method, but will is said to be identical with the category of existence called Sadāśiva. Sadāśiva category represents that state of consciousness in which the universe has not been differentiated, but exists in the state of unity. Insofar as the awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī is concerned, it is the *bodha-kuṇḍalinī* that is aroused. The *bodha-kuṇḍalinī* is identical with knowldge, and so reflects the perfect state of undifferentiated unity. As the Way of Śiva is characterized by interior reflection or thinking that is spontaneous and indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*), so this method is appropriate for such adepts who have, through the process of inner and outer purification, arrived at the highest spiritual state. Accordingly the Way of Śiva may be seen as the result of cultivation of the Individual Way and the Way of Energy.

Since the experience of unity between the macrocosm and the microcosm is said to be indeterminate, so this transcendent experience cannot be conceptualized or predicated in terms of dogmatic propositions. Conceptualization would denote difference, and so would defeat the very purpose of the experience, which *a priori* is inexpressible. In order to avoid linguistic confusion, the Trika speaks of this experience of unity as being identical with the "void" (*śūnya*). In order to grasp the real import of the term, it is necessary to investigate its background and how the Buddhists have made use of it.

The fundamental conviction of the Buddhists, particularly of the Mahāyāna Buddhists, concerning the nature of the world is this: The world is impermanent and insubstantial. Impermanence for a Buddhist denotes that entities are no entities on account of them being insubstantial, which is understood to mean that everything phenomenal has no firm substratum. This doctrine of impermanence and of insubstantiality was ultimately interpreted to mean that everything is momentary (*kṣaṇika*) which, when translated into actual facts of experience, meant that every phenomenal category undergoes constantly the process of change, and change meant birth, maintenance, destruction and ineffability.[66] This process of continuous becoming is so rapid that it cannot be observed. Accordingly the analogy of the lamp's light is made use of to explain the momentary nature of things. As the light of the lamp, which seemingly seems to be unbroken, constantly undergoes emergence and submergence, so too undergo the phenomenal objects that appear to be permanent and substantial. As in the flame of the lamp exists simultaneously both existence and non-existence, so is the case with the phenomena.[67]

While accepting the Buddhist concept of the void not as non-existence, but as that lies between the two moments of time, the Trika thereby makes use of this concept to explain the yogic experience of transcendence of time. For the Trika, moreover, time (*kāla*) does not exist as an objective or independent entity, which connects one moment to another. The yogī, while plunging into the abyss of his being, disconnects the so-called objective frame of time from consciousness. It allows the yogī to penetrate the void (*madhya*) that lies between the two moments of time. In this way the yogī gains mastery over time, and thereby gains the power both of creation and destruction. It means that the yogī brings to standstill the two modalities of time, which are past and future, and so

> . . . at this very instant . . . at the present, actual moment (the mystical experience) is realized, while past and future are excluded. Then the present moment is also rejected as dependent upon the other two. . . .
>
> Having immobilized his own wheel of light and having drunk the incomparable ambrosia, one may be fully appeased in an eternal present, after having put an end to the two times.[68]

The concept of time in the Trika does not mean vacuity, nothingness, non-existence; rather it signifies the Absolute that is ineffable on account of its very nature. The Absolute is defined as that which is characterized by fullness. As the void is identified with the infinite space, so consciousness like space is not only infinite, but is freedom itself. It is for this reason that the self has been identified with the void of space.[69] Also consciousness like space is homogeneous and so represents the undifferentiated experience of Being. Accordinlgy the Absolute is identified with the Supreme Void to indicate its undifferentiated nature, and for the yogī it denotes the experience of consciousness as being an undifferentiated mass of Energy. As mass of Energy, consciousness thereby represents absolute freedom (*svātantrya-śakti*). When the self is identified with the void, it signifies for the yogī the disappearance or destruction of that which is phenomenal, and thereby the disappearance of the dualized structures of thought.[70] Upon the disappearance of phenomenality, which means freedom from duality, what remains is the vast expanse of ether, that is, the void. This apophatic vision of the Absolute is the culmination of the Way of Śiva.[71] As the Absolute like void is free from determinations, so by plunging into "the non-dual void" the yogī thereby has the experience of the illumination of the self.[72]

The absolute consciousness is characterized both by primary and secondary aspects. When the Absolute is spoken of as the "receptacle of the great void,"[73] it represents the primary aspect of the Absolute. The secondary aspect of the Absolute is characterized by creativity. When the process of manifestation within the absolute Void begins, the Supreme Śiva thereby sends forth the Light of Consciousness into the Void.[74] As the sperm fertilizes in the void of the womb, so Śiva's creative urge gets actualized in its own void. Thus the concept of void as a philosophic necessity is used in the context of manifestation of phenomenal categories of existence, in that the Supreme Consciousness, while manifestating itself as the world, conceals its plenitude. By hiding its plenitude, Śiva thereby manifests itself as the "this" (*idaṁ,* that is, the objective universe). Śiva as consciousness appears "all this" (*sarvam idaṁ*) when it conceals its Energy. It is thus Śiva itself who projects himself as the universe, and so the universe, being the reflection of Śiva-consciousness, is seen to be identical with the Transcendent. It appears as if the Absolute has fragmented itself when it projects itself as the variegated universe of objects. From the phenomenal standpoint, the appearance of Śiva as the universe would denote as if the unity of consciousness has lost its equipoise in giving rise to the phenomenal diversity. Also this diversity seems to have been actualized on account of disturbance that must have taken place within consciousness. Outwardly it would appear that the external diversity owes its existence to the disturbance as well as to the loss of equipoise within consciousness. The Trika, however, opines that the apparent division of consciousness is not real. It is as real or unreal as a mirage in a desert. Had this division within undifferentiated consciousness been real, it would no more be the Absolute. It is assumed that the undifferentiated Absolute always remains latent in the phenomenal entities as their substratum. Even though there is manifoldness in the world, it is the undifferentiated consciousness which is seen as the substratum of entities that are constitutive of phenomenality. The yogī of the Way of Śiva experiences the undifferentiated content of consciousness when he, through absorption and introversion, transcends the dualistic patterns of thought. Upon returning to the centre of undifferentiated mass of consciousness the yogī perceives what the apparent world is all about, and treats it as such, which is that it is the reflection of the Supreme Consciousness.

When the yogī experiences the mystical unity between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the initial vibration of the experience is called *udyama* or *udyoga,* which means spontaneous emergence. Literally the terms means ardour, fervour, inner thrust, flame of desire, inspiration, ecstasy, etc. *Udyama* as the pure act of ecstasy is characterized by an experience in which "the moment in the present" comes to a standstill. It implies that the mystical experience, while transcending the flow of time, abides in the non-time of consciousness, which is the present and denotes the attainment of the state of non-death. This experience of cessation of time is as spontaneous as is the flash of light that emanates from lightning. With the cessation of time, the external world also ceases to be. Prior to the fructification of pure act of consciousness there occurs, so we are told, a subtle mevement in the heart of the yogī, which can neither be quantified nor measured. This inward movement within the heart is sudden. Upon its intensification, the stir gushes out towards the Supreme Śiva. The gushing out of this vibration is spontaneous and sudden. Consequently the yogī holds onto Śiva as tightly as a predator holds its prey.[75]

The mystical vibration is actualized upon transcending the triadic activity of consciousness, which are activity (*kriyā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and will (*icchā*). Accordingly consciousness of the yogī submerges (*samāveśa*) in the calm repose of Śiva-consciousness. Even though the movement of vibration may have attained a certain degree of calmness at the level of the Individual Way, the yogī, however, still is subject to the dualistic forms of experiences. Everything in the world is cognized as being different from one's own self. The objective duality, at the level of the Way of Energy, is abandoned. There, however, remains the conceptual duality. It is at the level of the Way of Śiva where both forms of duality, objective and subjective, are transcended. At this level there appears an intense desire in the heart of the yogī in the form of vibration, and consequently there flashes forth an illumination that illumines the self. This sudden illumination pulls the yogī towards Śiva. As the initial vibration itself is said to be of undifferentiated nature, so its location is assumed to be that where the Cosmic Heart pulsates. The mystical awareness of this vibration corresponds to the cosmic awakening (*unmeṣa*). The instantaneous pulsation, however, comes from Śiva, and so is fulfilled the goal of the Way of Śiva:

> The concentration of the myriads of energies everywhere perceived is Śiva, the supremely autonomous; his impulse is the essence of the Heart.[76]

The Null Way

The last method, which is no-method, is called the Null Way (*anupāya*). This method corresponds to the bliss (*ānanda*) aspect of the Absolute, and so is referred to as the Way of Bliss. As this method is termed as being no-method, it means that no effort, or any kind of exertion, mental or physical, is involved in it.[77] The method, if we may speak of it so, is the negation of all the methods on account of two reasons. First, it is *a priori* assumed that there is nothing to be achieved. Why? Because the self is ever-existent, and is not away from us. As the self always shines with the lustre of its own illumination, so there is no question of making use of any method for its attainment. Second, it is theologically propounded that the Null Way, being of the nature of Transcendent (*anuttara*), represents that which is not phenomenal, which means that it is beyond thought and word. Since all the methods belong to the phenomenal category, so how can it be assumed that the phenomenal method will terminate in that which is Transcendent? It is how the paradox is explained by Abhinavagupta:

> In the Transcendent, where we talk of the difference between the worship, the worshipper, and the worshipped who transits (into the Real), who makes one transit, and what is the point of transition? All this (difference) is false; there is nothing separate from the unity of Consciousness. Everything is the experience of the Self and is pure by its very nature; so worry ye not.[78]

As the Transcendent is the undifferentiated mass of consciousness, so the question of doing anything or not doing anything for its realization does not arise at all. As the Null Way is equated with the Transcendent, so this method tells us to be as natural or spontaneous as is air in the sky. It is the spontaneous naturalness which the Null Way encapsulates. The adept who follows this Way is not an ordinary person. He has arrived at such a spiritual level whereby he has nothing to do precisely because "There is no attainment of the Self, for it is eternally present."[79] As the awareness of the Self already exists, so the question of it being realized does not at all arise. The awareness of the Self as being eternally present as well as being self-illumined[80] comes to a person who is spiritually evolved by having gone through the first two methods of the Individual Way and the Way of Energy. When we speak of a spiritually evolved person, we mean by it that he, having eradicated the traces of impurities, is no more under the influence of any obscuring veil.[81] As the Null Way stands at the top in the hierarchy of means of liberation, so it is considered to be the culmination of all spiritual disciplines. As such it may not be viewed merely as a negation of other spiritual disciplines, but as their fulfilment.[82]

The Null Way is also spoken of as the Way of Bliss on account of joy being predominant in it. Simultaneously it is also called the Way of Recognition (*pratyabhijñā-upāya*), because it terminates in direct awareness concerning the nature of the Self,[83] without going through the process of initiation (*dīkṣā*).[84] Accordingly the Null Way has been termed as the Way of Self-Awareness (*vimarśa-upāya*). The Null Way, thus, is seen as the fulfilment of all the ways of liberation. Abhinavagupta makes this point quite explicit when he asserts that the Way of Śiva terminates in the Null Way and thereby finds its fullness in the latter.[85] It is not far from the truth to say that all the methods of liberation are synthesized in the Null Way. The freedom or liberation that comes to be on account of the Null Way is not the result of one's effort, as is the case with the first two ways. Rather freedom emerges on account of divine grace (*anugraha*), which is the last cosmic activity of Śiva.[86] The function of grace is to lead the adept to complete freedom from bondage which his humanity entails.

The adept of the Null Way receives salvific grace from Śiva, which results in his self-realization, and in terms of which he recognizes himself to be non-different from the Absolute. The grace of Śiva is not a kind of reward for one's religious merits. Rather it is a free gift, and has to be seen as being independent of any human act. Further the Trika believes that it is grace alone which is the cause (*hetu*) of self-recognition. It is in terms of self-recognition that the adept realizes his essential ontic unity with the Absolute, which is Śiva.[87] The measure of grace that the adept receives is dependent upon the measure of spiritual level he has attained, which means how much purification from impurities has been realized. Insofar as the Null Way is concerned, the adept of this Way receives the highest degree of grace (*tīvra-śaktipāta*), and accordingly experiences immediate release from bondage. The adepts of this Way "do not require any psychological practices, rituals, or initiations. They get light from within and not from external sources."[88] Upon whom the grace of highest intensity descends attains to freedom immediately, and consequently knows that he is not different from Śiva. This identification with Śiva is also called the *tremendous state* (*bhairava-mudrā*) on account of it being inexpressible and inexplainable, and the bliss that is experienced in this state is said to be of cosmic nature (*jagadānanda*).[89]

Upon attaining to the state of absolute freedom (*mokṣa*), the liberated one (*jīvanmukta*) thereby appropriates all the objectivity that lies outside of consciousness. In assimilating the objectivity within one's subjectivity the adept thereby realizes perfect freedom, and this aspect of liberation is expressed by Abhinavagupta thus:

> Even though the Master of the Universe always shines in us as our Self, nevertheless his nature is not recognized in its transcendence and its sovereignty; the heart is not full of the plenitude of light. But when the soul becomes aware of the true freedom of the Self and of its liberation from this life, perfection will be attained.[90]

The aim of the Trika adept is not so much to liberate himself from human bondage as much as to experience the essential nature of the Self, and thereby attain to the state of Bhairava. Upon knowing what the Self is, the adept thereby destroys the threads of ignorance, which otherwise bind him to the peg of saṁsāric becoming. It is the destruction of ignorance which results in liberation, and the one who succeeds in overcoming ignorance is called the liberated-while-alive (*jīvanmukta*). The really liberated is one who "has burst the bonds of ignorance, whose doubts have passed away, who has overcome delusion, from whom merit and demerit alike have vanished. . . ."[91] Consequently such a person looks at the world from a different perspective. He looks at the world with eyes that are open and with a heart that is free from the blemishes of unfreedom. He remains alike to both joy and pain, and for him there is nothing that is either joyful or hateful.

> Removing from himself conceit, joy or gain, wrath, lust, misery of loss, dread, avarice, and delusion, . . . he will walk like a senseless creature, without speech or perception.[92]

Whatever such a person does, is beyond reproach, because

> The man who has continuously practised burying himself (*samāveśa*) in Śiva and has fully recognized his energies of knowledge and activity as being the pure freedom of the Lord can then know and do all he desires even though he is still associated with the body. He is not only deified in the ordinary sense of the word, but he is fundamentally free because he uses at will the divine powers belonging to Parameśvara and lives in eternal freedom.[93]

SEVEN SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The attainment of freedom is not a matter of following this method or that one. Before cultivating any one of the methods, the adept has to undertake certain important aspects of Śiva-yoga. The most important aspect of this yoga is initiation (*dīkṣā*), which can be imparted only by a competent preceptor. The rite of initiation is called *liṅgādhāra.*[94] The Trika recognizes seven types of spiritual praxis (*sādhanā*), which are known as behavioural patterns (*ācāras*). The techniques of each method are meant to enable the adept to develop his spiritual skills, which may ultimately lead him to the Null Way whereby he may attain perfect freedom by burying himself in the Transcendent. The spiritual patterns of discipline are hierarchically so structured as to indicate their worth in terms of which spiritual progress may be made. Among the seven spiritual patterns, there are some which have the capacity of leading the adept to a relative freedom, whereas some others are said to have the full possibility of terminating in the ultimate freedom of non-duality. The following are the seven disciplines which are enumerated according to their worth:

1. *Vāmadeva: Vāmadeva* spiritual stage, from the Trika point of view, is considered to be the lowest stage, because it can lead the adept only to such spiritual experiences which are preliminary and relative. This discipline belongs to the Vedic tradition, and is characterized by the Vedic ritual observances as well as by the Brāhmanical four stages (*āśramas*) of life, which are *kāma, artha, dharma,* and *mokṣa.* This discipline consists of certain obligatory religious rites like the performance of sixteen sacraments (*saṁskāras*), worship of the Vedic deities, performance of the fire ritual (*homa*), etc. The ones who cultivate this discipline, according to the Trika, cannot reach the liberative freedom of non-duality. It can, however, create an inner disposition whereby in some future birth the adept of this path may have the chance of attaining to the state of liberative unity.

2. *Śivācāra:* Next to the *Vāmadeva* discipline is that of *Śivācāra,* which is somewhat superior to the former. It is a method of formal worship of, and devotion to, Śiva. In this method no rituals, whether Vedic or non-Vedic, are made use of, as it consists of pure devotion (*bhakti*) to Śiva. As the discipline has no capacity of leading the adept to final liberation, so the most it can do is to lead the adept to the experience of proximity to Śiva.

3. The third spiritual method, which is considered to be superior to the first two methods, is that of the *Vāmācāra,* or the Left-Hand Discipline. The discipline is characterized by an orientation in terms of which the Mother Goddess, Śakti, is made the focus of religious worship and ritual, and at the practical level this practice is translated into the

use of the Five Ms, which are: Meat (*māṁsa*), fish (*matsya*), liquor (*madirā*), fried beans (*mudrā*), and sexual intercourse (*maithuna*). The clutivation of this discipline results in the physical enjoyment (*bhukti*) as well as in the joy that is of liberative (*mukti*) nature. Also the cultivation of this method results in the attainment of magical powers.[95]

4. *Dakṣiṇācāra:* Next to the Left-Hand Discipline is the Right-Hand Discipline (*Dakṣiṇācāra*). It is also called the Familiac Discipline (*Kulācāra*). The discipline is considered to be superior to the above disciplines. The Right-Hand Discipline, like the Left-Hand Discipline, is oriented towards the worship of the Mother Goddess, who is seen to be representing the Energy of Śiva. This discipline is also somewhat akin to the *Vāmācāra* insofar as the use of the five forbidden items is concerned. The method is spoken of as the *Kulācāra* for the following reason. The ritualized use of the five forbidden items, which is performed in a closed room, is itself called the *Kulācāra.*[96] The use of women and of liquor, meat and fish is not allowed outside the secret ritual, and which is known as the Yoga of Circle (*cakra-yoga*). The adepts of this discipline are of the view that the cultivation of this path results in the immediate realization of liberation.[97] Also the adept of this path gains access to magical powers.

The term *kula* is synonymous with *kaula,* and has identical meaning, which is: Familiac. As the mother is the source of a family, so the Mother Goddess is said to be the source of all that exists in the universe, including the universe itself. Also the *kula* in this discipline denotes the six mystical centres (*cakras*), which are technically called *the wheels of energy.* The seventh centre is called the *akula*, the Abode of Śiva. As the *akula* represents the Absolute itself, so the *kula* represents Śiva in its manifest condition, which as Energy, called Kuṇḍalinī, is located in the lowest wheel or centre: the *mūlādhāra*. The aim of the Kula Discipline is to arouse the dormant Energy (Kuṇḍalinī). The arousing of the Kuṇḍalinī is accomplished through the use of certain techniques of yoga. Upon the arousal, the Kuṇḍalinī is directed upward through the central vein, *suṣumnā,* till she reaches the last centre, namely, the *akula/sahasrāra.* It is at this centre where she is united with Śiva/Akula. Upon the union of Śiva and Śakti, there occurs secretion of fluid which enables the adept to have the experience of ecstatic bliss, which is akin, if not identical, to the bliss that occurs at the peak of sexual orgasm. The basic purpose of the Kuṇḍalinī Yoga is to effect the union between Śiva and Śakti, and thereby the adept has the opportunity of experiencing joy that is of cosmic nature (*jagadānanda*).

The term *kula,* thus, is made use of to denote that form of yogic practice whose aim is to arouse the Kuṇḍalinī with the intention of letting her to be united with Śiva. Consequently, on account of the union between Śiva and Śakti, there occurs the secretion of a fluid, which is linked to ambrosia. It is through the Kula yogic techniques that the fluid is directed downward from the *sahasrāra* towards the lowest centre, the *mūlādhāra.* The yogic state in which the fluid flows downward is known as the *kula* state.

The first two stages of the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī are characterized by *śoṣaṇa* and *dhana,* the former representing the process whereby the mental impurities are dried up, whereas the latter is a process whereby the impurities are burnt up. Upon completing these two processes of purification, there remains the final state to be completed, which is that of bringing about union of Śakti with Śiva—and the accomplishing of this union between Śiva and Śakti is seeen as a kind of spiritual nourishment (*apyāyana*) of the adept in terms of which he has the experience of bliss of consciousness (*cidānanda*). The yogic practices, which are constitutive of the *Kulācāra* and which are directed toward the arousing of the Kuṇḍalinī, are called the *kula-kaula-mārga.* The goal of this discipline is fulfilled upon the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī, which results in the steady flow of the immortal flow downwards towards the root-*cakra.*[98]

5. The next Tāntric path is called *Kulācāra.* It is considered to be superior to all the above methods. Its other name is *Kaulācāra.* This method involves the worship of Śakti. It is partly akin to the way of *Vāmācāra,* because it accepts the use of wine, women, meat, etc. as necessary ingredients in certain secret rituals. In other words, this method accepts wholeheartedly both physical enjoyment and spiritual delight as not being opposed to each other. The followers of this method make use of the forbidden items in a closed room, and the use of the items for ritual purpose is called the *Kulācāra.* Use of women and wine is not allowed the outside ritual of *cakrayoga.* It is believed by the adherents of this path that the use of these items results in the attainments of quick liberation.

The term *kula* and *kaula* have synonymously been used. However, some Kaulas have used the term differently to denote different concepts. But, for all practical purposes, there is not much difference in their use. *Kula* in the *kulacakra-yoga* is the name given to six mystical centres. These centres are called *cakras,* or the Wheels of Energy. *Akula* is the name of the seventh mystical centre, which is believed to be located at the top of the head. The *akulacakra* is identified with Śiva himself, whereas *kula* is said to be the manifestation of Śiva which, as the sleeping energy (*śakti*), resides in the lowest *cakra*, called *mūlādhāra*, in the body. This Kula system aims at arousing this Sleeping Engery, viz., Kuṇḍalinī, by directing it upwards, so that it maybe united with Śiva, namely, Akula. The Kula path prescribes a yogic method by which the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī occurs. This union of Śiva and Śakti in the head results in the secretion of some kind of fluid, which is equated with the immortal nectar (*amṛta*). The main aim of this yoga is to experience the bliss of the union of Śiva and Śakti, which is termed as Cosmic Bliss (*jagadānanda*). The word *kula* is the name given to the practice of Kuṇḍalinī yoga, and the *kula* practices direct the ambrosial fluid from the top of the head, through the six mystical wheels, to the lowest wheel, viz., to the place where the Sleeping Energy resides. The state in which the flow of nectar takes is called the *kula* state. The first two stages of the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī are (i) the *śoṣaṇa*, viz., the drying up of psychic impurities and (ii) the *dhana*, viz., the burning of impurities to the condition of ashes. The final stage is that of union between Śiva and Śakti, and is accordingly called *apyāyana*, viz., the spiritual nourishment through the experience of the Bliss of Consciousness (*cidānanda*). All the practices of this method are collectively called the *kula-kaula-mārga*. The ultimate aim of this path is the attainment of the state of union of Śiva and Śakti, and thereby also the self-mergence in the Absolute. Also this method aims at having the experience of the ambrosial flow, which is believed to result in the attainment of immortality.

6. *Mātācāra:* The *Mātācāra* is the sixth discipline. The focus of attention of this discipline, too, is the Mother Goddess. No literary works of this discipline are available, as they seem to have been lost for ever. There are some references of this discipline to be found in the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta. The spiritual goal of this discipline is to have the realization of the union with the Ultimate.[99] It is probable that this spiritual discipline had its roots in the theoretical views of the eight monistic Āgamas,[100] which are considered as being the repository of revelatory wisdom. As nothing is known concerning the specific practices of this discipline, so it is hazardous to venture into a territory that is unknown. What, however, can be said with certainty is this: This discipline was oriented towards the worship of the Goddess, and so may be seen as representing esoterism of the Trika.

7. *Trika:* The last and the most superior spiritual discipline is said to be that of the Trika on account of it encompassing all other disciplines.

The Trika Discipline is seen as the culmination of all systems of thought and praxis, because in it exists a complete synthesis of the Way of Knowledge, of the Way of Ritual, and of the Way of Devotion. Each way or method is given its due place, and none is disparaged or elevated at the cost of the other. It is within this synthetic framework that the specific Trika Ways of Liberation have been framed, which are the Individual Way, the Way of Energy, the Way of Śiva, and the Null Way. The Trika, thus, may be said to represent a theology and praxis that is catholic and universal in character and orientation.

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61. *MM*, 58; *VB*, 123.
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63. Ibid., 1.179.
64. Ibid., 3.268.
65. Ibid., 3.280.
66. *MM*, 54. Although the self in itself is permanent and substantial, it is

experienced as being temporal in the context of destruction of an instant (*kṣaṇa*). And an instant is understood in terms of duration of an act of consciousness. See *T.Sā.,* 60.

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Chapter 9

Development of Trika

The Trika Śaivism of Kashmir seems to have taken a specific shape during the fourth century of our era. It is during this period when three types of canonical scriptures began to emerge, reflecting thereby the three kinds of theoretical views concerning the nature of Reality. In the first phase the scriptures (Āgamas, Tantras) that emerged contain a content that is purely dualistic (*bheda*), whereas the second phase is characterized by such scriptures which are dualistic-cum-non-dualistic in orientation. The scriptures of the final phase are monistic in nature (*abheda*). These scriptural texts, called the Āgamas or Tantras, are seen, like the Vedas, as being of divine origin, and thereby representing a knowledge that is considered to be revelatory in nature. It is upon the basis of this theoretical understanding that the Trika Śaivism came into being in the Valley of Kashmir. It was ultimately left to the great savant Abhinavagupta to synthesize all of them into the Trika framework, so that each school is seen as complementing the other.

As the Āgamas, in contrast to the Vedas, are seen as representing a new revelation for our age (*kaliyuga*), so they, theoretically speaking, supersede the revelation of the Vedas. Moreover, the Āgamic knowledge, from its very inception, is esoteric in nature, and accordingly reflects the gnostic stream of spirituality within the Indian framework. This gnostic spirituality found its ultimate expression in Tantrism. From the very beginning the Trika, in one way or the other, came to be associated with esoteric Tantrism, and finally gave birth to such *tāntrika* schools as the Kaula and the Krama. These esoteric schools mainly follow a philosophical orientation that is not very far away from that of the Trika. The specific contribution the esoteric schools made is with regard to praxis. The religious praxis of these schools is such as would be acceptable to the Trika. The philosophical schools to which the Trika gave birth are the School of Vibration and the School of Self-Awarencess. It is within the over-all Trika framework that a complete symbiotic union of thought and praxis of various schools took place.

It is traditionallly believed that the Trika owes its origin to Tryambaka who, through his disciples, established the three schools of thought, namely, the dualistic school (*bhedavāda*), the dualistic-cum-non-dualistic (*bhedābheda*) school and the non-dualistic (*abheda*) school. A fourth was added to the above three, which came to be known as the Ardha Tryambaka, that is "half Tryambaka," on account of it having come into existence through a descendent of Tryambaka's daughter. How far this traditional belief concerning the origin as well as development of Trika Śaivism of Kashmir is factual historically is a matter that may never be settled. As our concern here is not to find out the historical genesis of Trika, so let us leave the question of origin of Kashmir Śaivism to historians.

THE KAULA SCHOOL

The fourth school that was added to the three Āgamic schools, and owed its existence to a descendent of Tryambaka from the daughter's side, came to be known as the Familiac school, or the Kaula. The school is so named on account of its understanding of Reality, which is seen as consisting of a group (family) of categories. This family of categories is not separate from Reality itself; rather they emanate from it. The two most important categories, which form the backbone of *tāntirka* esoterism, are said to be Śiva and Śakti, representing the two poles of Reality as masculinity and femininity—Śiva as the Energizer and Śakti as Energy. This entire conceptual framework concerning the nature of Reality is explained by Jayaratha thus:

> . . .the plenary Light, intolerant of the specifications of Śiva, Energy and the other categories, the ineffable, supreme Recollection, in essence, the un-excluded—this Light is the Ultimate Reality. And only He, desirous of His liberty of irradiating the universe, manifests the nature of Śiva and His Energy in His interior being.[1]

Insofar as it historical roots or origins are concerned, it is assumed that, upon the great dissolution of the universe, came into being the universe of our age. Since our age is that of moral darkness (*kaliyuga*), so we need a religious way of life that may be much more conducive and effective. So it is the exigencies of time which, as it were, gave birth to the religious tradition that has come to be known as that of

Familiac Esoterism. Further it is believed that in our age of darkness it was a certain King Macchanda, also known as Matsyendranātha (the Lord of Fish), who revived this hidden esoterism again, and imparted it to his disciple Gorakṣanātha, the founder of the Haṭhayoga school. Macchanda, upon reviving the esoteric tradition of Kaulism, passed onto his sons the secrets of the tradition.[2] From Macchanda onwards we do not have much historical knowledge about Kaulism in Kashmir till the time of the composition of the *Parātriṁśikā* or *The Thirty Veses on the Supreme Goddess,* which is a *tāntrika* work and deals with the basic concepts of Kaulism like the nature of the manifest (*kula*), the unmanifest Śiva (*akula*), and the Familiac Energy (*kaulikīśakti*). This text, which the *tāntrikas* consider to be of utmost importance, has commentaries written by such original thinkers as Somānanda, Abhinavagupta, etc.[3] The Familiac school, from the time of Somānanda, to the arrival of Abhinavagupta, did not receive as much attention in Kashmir as did the Spanda and Pratyabhijñā schools. The Kaula tradition was given a new impetus by Abhinavagupta. The most revered teacher of Abhivavagupta, Śambhūnātha, was a Kaula, and it was but natural for the former to revive the spiritual tradition of Kaulism which had somewhat relapsed into oblivion.

Most of the texts of the Kaula tradition have been lost. Whatever knowledge we have of this tradition, it is from quotations and references from texts that belong to different spiritual traditions. *The Kālī Family* (*Kālīkula*) is a *tāntrika* text whose authorship is not known. The text, while giving a long list of teachers of the tradition, speaks of important rituals in the context of the praxis of Kaula tradition. The text also tells as to how and when the rituals have to be performed. Further the text informs us that it is Familism which represents the essence of *tāntrika* esoterism.[4]

It is said that in the ninth century, in addition to Somānanda, there lived five teachers of Kaulism who wrote original works on the Kaula thought and practice.[5] Kallaṭa, the author of the *Spandakārikā,* is supposed to have written an important text on Familism, which however is no more available. Abhinava's teacher, Śambhūnātha, wrote a text on *mantras,* namely, the *Tantrasadbhāvaśāsana.*[6] The adept of Kaulism either cultivates the Individual Way or the Way of Śiva for the purpose of realizing the soteric goal of freedom. Most of what we know concerning Kaulism is from the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta.

Gradation School

The next esoteric school, with which the Trika has close affinity, is the Gradation School (*kramavāda*). This tradition seems to have originated in Kashmir at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century of our era. The Krama school is very close in its theological orientation to Kaulism, particularly with regard to the Twelve Consuming Energies (*kālīs*).[7] The very name of the school visualizes as to what kind of approach it cultivates with regard to the realization of the Real. Instead of believing in instantaneous realization, the Krama adheres to the notion of gradual, or step by step, spiritual ascension or progress. It amounts to saying that the Real is realized through successive (*krama*) stages, and not in one jump. The school is also termed as Kālīnaya, the Way of Kālī, and Kālī is seen as representing the Absolute. The other names of the school are Mahānaya, or the Great Way, and the Mahārthadarśana, or The Vision School of Great Meaning.[8]

The works of such important teachers of the School as Śivānanda, Eraka, and Somarāja have been lost. Whatever information we have of the school is from the texts of other schools. Some of the important texts of unknown authors of the school are as follows:

1. *Kramasūtra* or *The Aphorisms on Gradation.* It is the basic text of the school and is written in aphorisms. It has a commentary by Kṣemarāja.

2. *Pañcaśatikā* or *The Five Hundred Verses.* It is a very important text of the tradition. In this text are delineated the theological concept of twelve Kālīs.

3. *Kramastotra* or *The Gradation Hymn.* It is on this text on which Abhinavagupta wrote his famous commentary called the *Kramakeli* or *The Gradation Frolic.*[9]

4. *Dehasthadevatācakra,* or *Hymn to the Circle of Deities Abiding in the Body.* It is a text that is written by Abhinavagupta. In it Abhinava glorifies the various deities who are supposed to be residing in the different parts of the body.

5. *Mahārthamañjarī,* or *Banquet of Great Meaning.* The author of this text is Maheśvarānanda. In the text are put forward the basic theological conceptual framework of the tradition. It also concerns itself with other Trika tradition.

The Gradation School, on account of its esoterism, focuses its attention on such themes whose concern it is to reflect on Reality as being of the nature of Energy. It is in the context of its esoterism that the school has made use of such means of liberation that are hidden or secret. Thus the rituals as well as the use of sexuality is not divulged to the non-initiates. Insofar as its esoterism is concerned, it has much in common with Kaulism. While following the Way of Energy, the Gradation School thereby lays much emphasis upon the worship of the Goddess as well as upon the Wheel of Energies and ritual sex.

THE SELF-AWARENESSS AND THE VIBRATION SCHOOLS

The two Tāntric traditions, Kaulism and Kramism, provide the practical aspect of the Trika, which is made use of within the philosophical framework of the Self-Awareness (*pratyabhijñā*) and Vibration (*spanda*) schools. These philosophical traditions conceive of Reality as being of non-dual nature, and so accordingly cultivate the Null Way for the realization of non-dual state of Being. The individual self is recognized as being non-different from the Absolute, which is Paramaśiva and is termed as of the nature of consciousness. The earliest author of these schools known to us is Vasugupta (*ca.* AD 825-50) who, through his composition called the *Śivasūtra,* or the *Aphorisms on Śiva,* gave the practical philosophical shape to the ideas found in the monistic Āgamas. Subsequently the pupil of Vasugupta, Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, wrote the *Spandakārikā* in which the basic ideas of his teacher are explained. He also wrote commentaries on the *Śivasūtra* as well as on the *Spandakārikā.*[10]

Next in importance is Somānanda (*ca.* AD 850-75) who, in his *Śivadṛṣṭi,* or *The Vision of Śiva,* gave a systematic presentation of the basic metaphyscial concepts that have become constitutive of the Trika. He also wrote commentaries on the *Śivadṛṣṭi* and on the *Parātriṁśikā.* The commentary on the latter is no more extant.[11] The other important thinker is Utpaladeva who lived during the end of the ninth century and first half of the tenth century. He wrote a very important philosophical treatise called the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā,* or *The Memorial Verse on the Supreme Lord's Self-Recognition.* This philosophical text has two important commentaries from Abhinavagupta, namely, the *Vimarśinī,* or the *Examination,* and the *Vivṛtivimarśinī,* or the *Examination of the Gloss.*

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ABHINAVAGUPTA

Upon the appearnace of Abhinavagupta on the scene,[12] there occurred a new trasformation within the philosophical horizon of the Trika. He gave a new orientation to the Trika by integrating into it the diffused thoughts and practices of various schools that had arisen in the Valley of Kashmir. Abhinavagupta's ancestor, Atrigupta, settled in Kashmir in the eighth century of our era. For next one hundred fifty years we know nothing about the descendents of Atrigupta till the time of Varāhagupta, the grandfather of Abhinavagupta. Abhinava's father, Narasiṁhagupta, alias Cukhulaka, was a great scholar and a fervent devotee of Śiva. Abhinavagupta received his initial education from his father. Insofar as his mother, Vimala, is concerned, she is depicted by Abhinava as being very poius and devout. She seems to have died when Abhinava was a young lad.

Abhinavagupta's thirst for knowledge was immense. He studied almost all the branches of knowledge from various teachers. He studied both Jainism and Buddhism as well as various Tāntric branches and traditions. The teacher who satisfied his spiritual thirst was a certain Śambhūnātha. It is from this teacher that he learnt the secret Tāntric practices of Kaula tradition. It is by following the spiritual discipline of Kaulism that Abhinavagupta ultimately reached his final soteric goal of freedom. We know nothing concerning the end of his life. There is a tradition which says that he, alongwith his twelve hundred disciples, entered a cave from where he never returned. The cave still exists.[13]

He began his literary career at a mature age and wrote outstanding texts on all the three branches of Trika. Initially he wrote comprehensively on the theology of the Gradation School. The theological framework of the School, however, seems not to have satisfied his inquisitive mind. He accordingly turned to two other branches, namely, to the doctrines of the Self-Awareness School as well as to Kaulism.[14] The masterpiece that he produced is his *Tantrāloka* or the *Light on the Tantras*. The text has been printed in twelve volumes. It is massive in scope and encyclopaedic in range.

As already pointed out, Abhinavagupta initially began his literary career by concentrating upon the theology of the Gradation School, and consequently wrote the *Gradation Hymn* and the *Gradation Frolic:* The latter being the commentary on the former, which however is no more available. Also he wrote at this time the *Antecedent Pentad,* or the *Pūrva Pañcikā,* which too has been lost. In this text a detailed exposition and analysis concerning the themes of the *Mālinīvijayatantra* are given. The *Mālinīvijayatantra* is the most authoritative text of the Trika. In addition to his contribution to the Gradation School, Abhinava also composed texts concerning Kaulism, which are the *Praise on the Tremendous God*

(*Bhairavāstva*), and the two commentaries on the *Parātriṁśikā* called *Vivṛti* and *Vivaraṇa.* Next he composed the *Fifteen Verses on Enlightenment* (*Bodha Pañcadaśikā*), which concerns itself with the exposition of the basic monistic principles of Trika Śaivism, and is meant for those who are unable to grasp the abstruse philosophical concepts that one may come across while studying Trikism. It is, however, in the *Tantrāloka* where the unique originality of Abhinavagupta shines forth. In this encyclopaedic treatise all the branches of Trika thought and praxis have been discussed in detail. Also a cohesive synthesis has been realized by integrating the diffused viewpoints into a unitary vision of the Trika. The text has a commentary, called *Viveka,* by Jayaratha. The ideas contained in the *Tantrāloka* were further developed by Kṣemarāja and Maheśvarānanda.

The second period of Abhinavagupta's literary career centered more on aesthetics than on philosophy or theology. The important texts that he composed on matters of aesthetic are his *New Eloquence* (*Abhinavabhāratī*), which is a commetnary on the *Treatise on Dance* (*Nāṭyaśāstra*); *The Illumination of the Light of Suggestion* (*Dhvanyāloka-locana*), which is a commentary on the *Light of Suggestion* (*Dhvanyāloka*); and the *Exposition of the Wonder of Poetry* (*Kāvyakautuka Vivaraṇa*). The latter text has been lost.

The third literary period of Abhinavagupta is completely given to the exposition as well as analysis of such theological themes which formed the backbone of the Trika. The most important theological treatises that he wrote during this period are the following:

The Compendium on the Gītā (*Bhagavadgītāsaṁgraha*) is a commentarial work on the *Gītā.* In this commentary Abhinava shows as to how the themes of the *Gītā* do not contradict the philosophic standpoint of Trika. The interpretation of the *Gītā,* thus, is offered from a Trika perspective.

Abhinava also wrote two important philosophical commentaries, called the *Short Examination* and the *Great Examination.* Both these commentaries are on the seminal work of Utpaladeva, namely, *The Memorial Verses of the Supreme Lord's Self-Awareness* (*Īśvara-pratyabhijñākārikā*). In these two commentaries Abhinava gave a firm metaphysical footing to the Trika.

Upon the passing away of Abhinavagupta the task of furthering the cause of the Trika fell upon his worthy disciple, Kṣemarāja, who also happened to be his cousin. The literary output of Kṣemarāja is so enormous that it is not possible to deal with it here comprehensively.

We shall concern ourselves only with such texts that have tried, by following the example of Abhinava, to synthesise the various strands of thought into the unitary framework of the Trika. The important texts that Kṣemarāja wrote are the following:[15]

Flash on the Tantra of Self-Will (*Svacchandoddyota*). It is a commentary on the *Svacchandatantra*, which as an Āgamic text is considered to be revelatory in nature.

Ascertainment of Vibrancy (*Spandanirṇaya*). It is a commentary on the *Memorial Verses on Vibrancy* (*Spandakārikā*). There is a dispute concerning the authorship of the *Spandakārikā:* Some attribute its authorship to Vasugupta, whereas others to Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa.

The Heart of Self-Awareness (*Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam*). It is an original treatise on the philosophy of Self-Awareness. The basic principles of the philosophy of Recognition are explained in it. The author also wrote a commentary on it.

Next to Kṣemarāja is Maheśvarānanda who, too, engaged in the task of clarifying the synthetic approach of Abhinava. Maheśvarānanda came from south India and was one of the great non-Kashmiri expounder of the Trika. He is supposed to have written eleven treatises. The important treatise that he wrote is *The Banquet of Great Meaning* (*Mahārtha-mañjarī*). He also wrote a commentary on it called the *Parimala* or *Fragrance*. Although these two texts deal mainly with the philosophy of Kaulism, yet they do not overlook the other aspects of the Trika.

THE SYNTHETIC VISION OF THE TRIKA

The synthesized version of the Trika consists of the following: The Absolute or Paramaśiva is seen essentially to be limitless and eternal consciousness, and the universe, including the entities therein, are but the reflection of this Supreme Consciousness. As the phenomenal is a reflection of the Absolute, so it must, prior to its manifestation, be ? identical with it.[16] Insofar as the nature of the Supreme Consciousness is concerned, it is of two types: static (*prakāśa*) and dynamic (*vimarśa*). To the extent Reality is viewed as being consciousness, and thereby transcendent, to that extent it has to be understood as being static. In its transcendent aspect the Absolute is both inexpressible and unthinkable.[17] It is the transcendental dimension of the Absolute which reveals its Fullness. Insofar as the dynamic aspect of the Absolute is concerned, it is in and through this aspect that it expresses or manifests itself as the phenomena, and thereby reveals itself as being identical with Freedom.

It is for this reason that the Trika conceives of the Absolute as being Freedom (*svātantrya*) itself. At the religious level of devotion and praxis, these two aspects of the Absolute are spoken of as Śiva and Śakti. The Absolute as Śiva and Śakti, or the Divine Couple, are responsible in emitting (*visarga*) the cosmos out of itself. It is as the Divine Couple that the Absolute is seen as God and so is attributed with four cosmological as well as with one soteriological activities. These five activities are expressed, in symbolic terms, by the five faces of Śiva, which technically are called "the pentad of *brahman*" (*brahma-pañcaka*). Concerning the five faces of Śiva, Gonda has this to say:

> The doctrince of the five manifestations of Śiva Who, according to his worshippers, is . . . the Great Lord, expresses the belief that he is the all, the Highest and the Unique, who embraces and comprises the universe and all beings and of whom they are composed. . . . It emphasizes . . . God's identity with the universe and the universe's identity with God Who is omnipotent and manifests Himself and His activity always and everywhere.[18]

When God as the Divine Couple expresses itself, by making use of the cosmic powers, as the universe, it denotes that the world, which we experience as being different from ourselves, is non-different from God. The very idea of identity is expressed thus: *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are one. The two are different to the extent the individual consciousness, on account of ignorance, perceives them to be so. It is upon the eradication of ignorance that the non-dual nature of Reality is perceived. The five cosmic activities of God may, thus, be seen as a means of self-expression, and in terms of which both the cosmic manifestation as well as its dissolution are accounted for.[19] It is God himself who, as it were, reduces himself to the state of a bound being by incarnating himself as an atomic self. It may sound heretical to say that it is God himself who is both a sinner and a saint. The assertion is not shocking to the one who has recognized, within the depths of his being, the non-dual nature of the Absolute. This theology of *kenosis* is expressed thus:

> The God whose nature is that of free consciousness, whose characteristic is the supreme Light, due to his own intrinsic nature and as a result of his enjoyment of the sport of concealing his own nature, becomes the atomic, the finite self, of which there are many. He himself, as a result of his own freedom, binds himself here by means of actions whose nature is composed of imagined differentiations. Such is the power of God's freedom that, even though he has become the finite self, he once more truly attains his own form in all its purity.[20]

It is the dynamic aspect of the Absolute which, as its Energy (*śakti*), expresses itself as the finite self. This process of self-manifestation of God is known as the movement of opening (*unmeṣa*) or of expansion (*vikāsa*), and, at the religious level, is represented by Śakti, which in terms of popular religiosity is conceived of as the Goddess. Śiva, through his Energy, displays the absolute freedom of his will when he engages in the sport of mainfestation, and thereby, as it were, empties himself of divinity by becoming a finite being. It is through the five cosmic activities that Śiva enacts the play of creational manifestation. Collectively these powers are called as the Wheel of Energy of Śiva. The tripartite levels of manifestation as the highest (*parā*), the intermediate (*parāpara*), and the lowest (*apara*) constitute the entire range of the cetegories of existence (*tattva*), which from Paramaśiva to the lowest finite being are said to be thirty-seven.

The reverse of mainfestation is the process of resorption of the manifest, and this process is known that of contraction (*saṁkoca*) or closing (*nimeṣa*). Upon the dissolution of the manifest, everything returns to its primordial condition, which is represented by the non-dual state of the Absolute, and, at the religious level, is represented by Śiva. The yogī who experiences both the movements of projection and withdrawal of the manifest attains to the ultimate soteric state of recognition in terms of which differentiations are transcended.

Although in metaphysical terms this cosmic manifestation is spoken of as being equivalent to the reflection in a mirror, yet at the religious level it is termed as emission (*visarga*), which is akin to the emission of semen. This urge for emission within the Absloute occurs on account of inner agitation (*kṣobha*). When the agitation intensifies, it results in the emission of the objective universe. This agitation or throb (*spanda*), which is innate to the nature of Śiva and is represented by his Śakti, the Goddess, gives the delightful taste upon reaching the point of climax. It is akin to the orgasmic delight. As the orgasmic bliss terminates in the emission of semen, so the throbbing bliss is nothing but the emission itself. The throb is Śakti. It is on account of Śakti that agitation within Śiva gives rise to the emissional bliss. Upon the union of Śiva and Śakti, there begins the process of emission which, upon its actualization, results in the emergence of the world. It is this emission of creation as well as its resorption which the Trika adept wants to master through such rituals that have a sexual connotation. Thus for a Trika adept the ritualized sex is seen as a means of attaining that divinized power whereby one is capable of enacting within both the processes creational manifestation and its resorption.

Once the manifestable is vomitted out of the Divine Couple, the manifest thereupon is not seen apart from the Divine Dyad, that is, apart from Śiva and Śakti. Rather the presence of the Divine Couple in terms of emission is everywhere. Accordingly does the Trika assert the identity between the macrocosm and the microcosm. When this emissional imagery is translated into the philosophic language, it means that God is seen to be both the material as well as efficient cause of the universe. As the world is the emission or reflection of the Absolute, so it, the world, is not to be treated as a false entity.[21] The world, rather, is an outward projection of the Absolute, which shines as the absolute "I". The phenomenal entities may be seen to be real in the context of their I-ness.[22] That which is phenomenal is not absolutely real on account it having both rise and fall. The manifest world, thus, has a beginning and an end.[23] The world, however, is real in its essence, as it is nothing but the expression of Consciousness. The Lord, when appearing as the bound soul, projects himself as the many, thereby losing apparently its non-daul nature. The diversity of the world disappears when, upon the limited being, descends the grace of Śiva, which terminates in the full realization of Being as non-dual. It is upon overcoming differentiation that the Trika adept reaches his ultimate soteric goal of freedom. So we may conclude with the following words of Abhinavagupta which reflect the true intent of the Trika:

> When the Heart (of Consciousness) is pure and (free from thought-constructs), it harbours the Light which illumines the radiant, primordial plane (*prāgra-bhūmi*) together with all the categories of existence. (The yogī) then realizes through it his identity with Śiva who is pure Consciousness.[24]

Finally, the goal of the Trika is to synthesize the ways of knowledge, devotion and action, so that no gap may exist among them nor may they be seen as opposites. At the same time the Trika has given a practical synthetic shape to its conception of Reality as being both Absolute and personal God. In this manner both theism and non-dualism have been synthesized. The soteric goal is not the attainment of mere gnosis but the experience of the serene bliss when the self recognizes itself to be in the All and the All in itself.[25]

REFERENCES

1. *TĀV*, 2.75; K.C. Pandey, op. cit., p. 542.
2. Pandey, ibid., pp. 546-48.

3. Ibid., pp. 488-89.
4. *TĀ*, 27.7; 29.23.
5. The following is the list of teachers which Pandey has furnished. The teachers are Īśvara Śiva, who is said to have written a commentary on the *Vāmakeśvaratantra* in accordance with the doctrinal principles of Kaulism, Śaṁkararāśi, Viśvārarta, and Dīpikaṇṭha.
6. *TĀ*, 30.24.
7. Ibid., 3.157.
8. Pandey, op. cit., pp. 462-83.
9. Ibid., pp. 471-76.
10. Ibid., pp. 154-56.
11. Ibid., pp. 161-62
12. Abhinavagupta is said to have lived during the last quarter of tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century. He was a genius par excellence and wrote extensively on various philosophical, theological and aesthetical topics. The works that have come down to us or are known to us are forty-four. The literary career of Abhinava may be divided into the Tāntric Period (*tāntrika*), Aesthetic Period (*alaṁkāra*), and the Philosophical Period. Ibid., pp. 27-28, 43-77.
13. Ibid., p. 23.
14. Ibid., pp. 5-9.
15. Ibid., pp. 254-57.
16. *ĪP*, 1.4.1.
17. Bhāskara, *Ś.Sū.Vā.*, 1.5.
18. J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism, and Śaivism: A Comparison* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 35.
19. *MVV*, 1.76, 86.
20. Ibid., 13.103-4.
21. *ĪP*, 2.2.1.
22. Ibid., 1.4.1.
23. *Ś.Dṛ.*, 5.105-10.
24. *MV*, 1.212.
25. *ĪP*, 4.1.

Appendix A

A Note on Kuṇḍalinī

The intention here is not to discuss the historical antecedents either of Tantrism or Kuṇḍalinī. The main focus of our attention, rather, will be on those esoteric aspects of Kuṇḍalinī which are very little known. To acquaint ourselves as to what the Kuṇḍalinī esoterically denotes or means, we shall give a brief outline of it with the intention of not getting cought up in the secret clouds of esoterism. Prior to describing the nature and meaning of the Kuṇḍalinī, we feel it would be much better to explain those esoteric steps of the yogic path which terminate in the arousal of the dormant Energy in the body. While explaining the essential steps or parts (*aṅgas*) of the path, we shall find out as to how within the Trika esoterism these steps are made use of and what results their practice gives rise to.

The Preliminary Steps

Whatever the orientation of a yogic school may be, the practice of the preliminary steps, as envisaged by the Classical Yoga of Patañjali, constitute the essence of a spirituality that is directed inwards. What it means is this: All the schools of yogic discipline have one aim, and that is how to achieve the total introversion of consciousness, and thereby transcend the normal modes of cognition. For this purpose the school of Classical Yoga invented eigtht steps of the ladder of spiritual ascension, and the later yogic schools have accepted them either as wholesale or in modified forms.

We shall not explain the first two steps of *yama* and *niyama*, as they are of general import and are mainly ethical in nature. We shall begin from the third step of the ladder, which is that of posture (*āsana*). For a *tāntrika* an *āsana* does not simply denote such a physical posture which is comfortable and which is considered to be conducive for the practice of mental concentration. Rather the *āsana* has to be interiorized so that *awareness* may be established in the central point of the two breaths (*madhyamam-prāṇam*). Once awareness is established in the inner centre of the two breaths,[1] there spontaneously emerges an inward posture. It does not mean that the external posture is not given due consideration in esoteric traditions. It is upon gaining proficiency in the art of external posture that a *tāntrika* begins to interiorize the posture (*āntarika-āsana*) by concentrating upon the central point that is said to exist between the outgoing (*prāṇa*) and incoming (*apāna*) breaths. This is how the inward *āsana* has been described in one of the Tāntric texts:

> On the pathway of your breath, maintain continuously refreshed and full awareness on, and in the centre of, the breathing in and breathing out. This is force and this is internal posture (*āsana*).[2]

Whenever the central point, in the context of meditative concentration, is spoken of, it always denotes the point of meeting or conjunction (*saṁdhi*). It is by focusing attention on the central point of the breaths,[3] that the interiorization of the posture is realized. The focusing of attention has to ensue from the beginning to the end of the breaths. The practice of concentration must never be done either during the day or the night. The proper time for this practice is that point of junction when the day emerges or submerges, that is, either at dawn or in the beginning period of evening. Once the internal posture has been realized, the *tāntṛika* adept steps into what is called the *prāṇāyāma* or the breath control. The process of moving from the posture to the breath control is described thus:

> If, when breathing out and breathing in, you maintain a continual awareness on the centre between the in-coming and the out-going breaths, then your breath will, spontaneously and progressively, become more refined. At that point you are elevated to another world, which is that of *prāṇāyāma*.[4]

There are two methods which Tantrism has envisaged for the practice of *prāṇāyāma:* The *ajapa-gāyatrī* method and the *cakrodaya* method. The first method consists of in being aware, while inhaling and exhaling the breaths, of the central point from where the breath begins and the point where it ends. The awareness has to be unbroken and continuous. On account of it being difficult to practice, very few adepts practice it. It is the second method of "the emergence of the wheel" (*cakrodaya*) which is preferred on account of it being less cumbersome. The kind of awareness that is to be maintained, while practising this method, has neither to be external nor internal. Awareness, rather, has to be of that which emerges from the abyss of the centre of the two breaths.

It is the belief of *tāntrikas* that the normal breathing is of coarse nature, and on account of its coarseness we are unable to fix attention or awareness upon the central point of the two breaths. It is the aim of the method of *cakrodaya* to bring about refinement in the process of breathing. This is brought about, while practising the technique of breath control, by lengthening the span of breathing. According to the *tāntrikas,* long exhalation or inhalation occupies less space, whereas the shorter ones are supposed to be occupying more space.[5] If the movement of breathing occupies less space, so we are told, the adept thereby is enabled to attain deep introversion of consciousness quickly and more spontaneously. It is even claimed that one will attain to the condition of omnipresence and omnipotence if reduction is made in the space of breathing by one *tuṭi.*[6] It is through the practice of *cakrodaya* that the movement of breathing is lengthened, and thereby is reduced the space which the short breathing is supposed to be occupying. While lengthening the process of breathing, the adept must exhale and inhale in such a manner that the emerging sound should be audible to those who may be sitting nearby.

There are two schools of thought concerning as to how the ascendent and descendent breaths should commence. One school holds the view that the breaths should be inhaled and exhaled by the heart, whereas the other school believes that the breathing should be conducted by the throat. Most of the *tāntrikas,* however, think that it is dangerous to engage in such a form of breathing that originates from the heart. It is held that this practice generates intense heat within the heart. Consequently heat can damage the heart as well as may lead to mental sickness. Even there is the danger of death in case the practice is not conducted with care. The practice that the *tāntrikas* recommend is the one that is least harmful, which is that both inhalation and exhalation must be conducted by the throat.

Upon deepening awareness through inhalation and exhalation and by focusing the attention upon the central point of breaths, the adept thereby is ready to abandon his normal states of consciousness, which are those of waking, sleeping and dreaming. The state which the adept enters is called the "fourth" (*turīya*). The Fourth is a state which emerges at the conjunction of any three normal states of consciousness, which are: wakefulness (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*) and deep sleep (*suṣupti*).

Upon gaining proficiency in the technique of *prāṇāyāma,* the adept moves onto the next yogic stage, which is that of *pratyāhāra,* and in which consciousness sinks much more deeper into itself. While the adept may experience giddiness or sleep during the practice of breath control, these or such-like experiences do not occur at the level of *pratyāhāra.* All the organs of the body instead become inert or non-functional. As they lose the capacity for any kind of action, it means that the organs of action (*karmendriyas*) become lifeless and powerless. It is the organ of perception which still functions, though dimly. Whatever one may hear or see, it is either inaudible or hazy. Whatever one sees, touches or hears, it is of the nature of hazy sensation. Cognition of anything does not leave its impression either in the mind or in memory. What it means is this: While one may be walking, one is never aware of walking. The sensation of perception is so dim as if one is aware of nothing. It is a state that resembles to that of sleep-walking. The deepening of introversion of consciousness denotes that the adept, while entering the Fourth state (*turīya*), attains to a condition in which he loses complete interest in that which is outside of him. It is a state characterized by self-abandonment, indifference and passivity. It is upon entering the Fourth that the inward journey begins, and thereby is given up the external journey that the adept had so far been traversing.

Upon the commencement of the inward journey, various kinds of experiences begin. The experiences that the adept is believed to be having are of subtle nature. It is the subtle aspect of the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*) which the adept experiences. He even experiences the subtle aspects of sound, taste, smell, touch, etc. These subtle experiences are said to be as delightful as is the experience of sexual intercourse. Permeated with the taste (*rasa*) and flavour of delight, these experiences are seen as impediments in the way of spiritual progress, for they deflect the attention of the adept from the chosen path of spirituality. The adept, thus, is advised not to give in to such experience. Therefore:

> When, during meditation, you experience the divinely produced internal subtle elements, pass through them, unminding your mind with great awareness, and enter into the supreme state of Consciousness. This is *pratyāhāra.*[7]

By avoiding these distracting experiences, which are pleasant to taste, the adept thereby buries himself deeply in the repose of introversion. Consequently whatever subtle links may be existing with the external world, they are, in the state of *pratyāhāra,* completely ruptured. Accordinly has *pratyāhāra* been defined as that method which efficaciously actualizes the sundering of bondage with *saṁsāra.*[8] Delinking consciousness from its relationship with the external, or emptying it of the content of knowledge, the adept thereby arrives at the knowledge of truth (*ritambharā*) as it is in itself. At this point of introversion the movement of breathing slows down to the maximum, and consequently the state of abstracion (*dhyāna*) is entered upon.

Prior to entering into the state of abstraction (*dhyāna*), the movement of breathing enters into the Central Vein (*suṣumnā*), and from there rushes downwards to the root-*cakra* where the Kuṇḍalinī is supposed to be lying in the state of dormancy. It is, therefore, the state of abstraction which corresponds to the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī. It means that all the yogic steps have to be traversed prior to the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī. It also means that complete proficiency in the yogic techniques has to be realized before the breathing enters the Gracious Vein. The state of abstraction is equated with the arousal of Kuṇḍalinī, and in this regard Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa writes the following in the *Spandakārikā* (1.23-24):

> When the yogī confirms internally that he will do whatever the state of Supreme Consciousness wills, and then takes hold of the sound-element (*spanda-tattva*), his breathing enters the Central Vein and rises again in the upward path (*ūrdhva-mārga*) as Kuṇḍalinī.

In the state of abstract absorption the adept abandons the ego, which means that he is no more aware of his empirical existence. At this point of absorption the process of visualization as well as the movement of breathing comes to an end—and no more is attention focused on the centre of the heart. It means that the state of absorption no more results from conscious effort; rather it emerges spontaneously. As a consequence of the cessation of mental processes, the adept's body is charged with an electric current. As a result of emergence of electric current within the body of the yogī, there occurs an experience of bliss which is characterized by the shock of wonder or amazement. This experience of bliss, in the form of a shock or amazement, is termed as the initiation of penetration (*vedeha-dīkṣā*), and about which we shall be speaking while discussing the arousing of the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī*, or that aspect of the Kuṇḍalinī which is equated with the life-force.

There are six types of *vedeha-dīkṣā,* and when the seventh one is reached, which is the final one, it means that the Kuṇḍalinī has reached to its destination, which is the top of the head. It is at this level of inwardness where the yogī steps from *dhyāna* into *dhāraṇā. Dhāraṇā* is that absorptive state of consciousness in which the mind establishes itself firmaly in "the internal reality of Supreme Consciousness."[9] Upon the completion of various of initiations, the yogī steps into the state of *dhāraṇā* whereby he is asked to adjust to the new situation that has emerged on account of trans-empirical cognition. The knowledge that is acquired thus gives credence to the monistic view of Reality which says that there exists essential correspondence between the universal and the particular. For the *tāntrika* yogī it means that he sees the world as non-different from *brahman,* or, should we say, the world exists, prior to its emission, as a latent seed within Śiva, who is but I-consciousness.

At this point of experience the entire body of the yogī is infused with energy. The breathing processes come to life. For the yogī it denotes the total proficiency in the art of absorption. While externalizing his awareness, he does not lose the link with the internal awareness. In whatever condition he may be, the yogī always remains in the mood of absorption. He has to make no effort at arriving at this state. It is spontaneous and automatic. Whether eating, drinking, sleeping or talking, the yogī remains in the Fourth (*turīya*), and accordingly this state is referred to as that of *krama-mudrā.* And the bliss that is experienced is of universal nature (*jagadānanda*).

From the *dhāraṇā* state a *tāntrika* yogī enters into the next state, which is ultimate as well as indeterminate. The state is called the *nirvikalpa-samādhi.* Upon reaching this state the Kuṇḍalinī of the yogī merges in Śiva, and thereby lets the yogī have the taste of the immortal nectar. A yogī, thus, attains a deathless state in terms of which he experiences the dissolution of the entire cosmos into the supreme I-consciousness. The ascent of the Kuṇḍalinī corresponds to the sinking of consciousness into itself whereby it loses its contact with the outside world. The merger of the Kuṇḍalinī into the Supreme Consciousness also denotes for the yogī, at the level of experience, dissolution of the objective universe, and in terms of which the resorptive moment, in contrast to the emissional one, is also realized by him.

THE NATURE OF KUṆḌALINĪ

The term *kuṇḍalinī,* linguistically speaking, means "the coiled one," and so is equated to a snake who is in sleep. From this meaning it is inferred that the origin of Kuṇḍalinī may be traced in such cosmogonic myths in which the snake plays an important role. As *tāntrikas* look at the Kuṇḍalinī as the creative power of Śiva, so it is easy to say as to why the snake and Kuṇḍalinī derive their meaning from each other. The rising of the Kuṇḍalinī, or her ascendent movement, may have its origin in the notion which measures the soul's progress in terms of its ascent. Upon the cosmic manifestation, the Kuṇḍalinī as the power of Śiva lies dormant, in the form of a snake,[10] at the lowest wheel (*cakra*) called the root-*cakra* (*mūlādhāracakra*)[11] in the human body. This lowest wheel is said to be located near the rectum. It is the aim of the *tāntrika* adept to arouse this latent Energy, and thereby realize the complete correspondence between the universal and the particular, which essentially denotes the realization of identity between the two, that is, the individual self and the Universal Self. Upon realizing the essential unity of Being, a yogī is said to have reached the soteric goal of liberation.

Kuṇḍalinī as the innate Energy of the Transcendent (*anuttara*) symbolizes the twofold activity of cosmic manifestation and resorption. As the Energy of Śiva, Kuṇḍalinī is seen as representing the feminine principle of fecundity, and thereby is seen as the source of all the manifestables. As the womb represents the void in which the seed germinates and fertilizes, so the Kuṇḍalinī is the Cosmic Womb of the Universal Seed, which, upon its germination, is ejected or emitted as the universe. The relationship that exists between Śiva as Consciousness and the Kuṇḍalinī as its innate Energy may be explained by making use of the analogy of the seed. Śiva could be linked to the seed and the Kuṇḍalinī to the potency of the seed. Upon the death of the seed, potency within the seed flowers into a sprout. Likewise is the case with the universal manifestation of Śiva as the cosmos.

This innate relationship between Śiva and Śakti (Kuṇḍalinī) has, at the religious level of praxis, been anthropomorphized as the Divine Couple, Śiva and Pārvatī. Upon the unification of the Couple, the seed (semen) is implanted in the Womb of the Goddess where the process of cosmic fertilization is initiated. Upon the fertilization of the seed, there occurs the cosmic emission. The ejection of the emission of the cosmos out of the womb takes place on account of the Śakti-Kuṇḍalinī. Thus it is the conjunction (*saṁdhi*) of the two that causes both emission and resorption of the universe. In the process of conjunction everything gets dissolved into the ecstasy of bliss. Upon the separation of the Couple, the process of universal emission occurs. The principle of conjunction or union, in the context of *tāntrika* meditation, is the central point of focus.[12] It is by meditating upon the central point that a *tāntrika* sinks into the meditative absorption, and thereby is enabled to arouse the dormant Kuṇḍalinī.

The Kuṇḍalinī, as the emissional power of Śiva, both reveals and conceals the essential nature of Śiva. She conceals the nature of Śiva the moment Śiva condenses himself into the finite entities of the world. The condensation of Śiva denotes, as it were, his own destruction. It is a process whereby Śiva, by becoming finite, empties himself of his divinity. The Kuṇḍalinī, however, reveals the nature of Śiva the moment the process of resorption of the manifest universe is actualized. What it means is this: Śiva reposes in his own essential nature. This twofold movement within Śiva is caused by his innate power called the Kuṇḍalinī-Śakti. It is the self-manifestation of Śiva as the cosmos that causes his concealment, whereas he reveals his nature the moment the process of universal dissolution is initiated.

The self-manifestation of Śiva as the cosmos also means that the Kuṇḍalinī gets atomized or particularized in each individual being as the dormant snake. The arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī as well as her traversing the six mystical centres along the Central Vein denotes, on the one hand, the disappearance of that which is objective and, on the other hand, it signifies the self-revelation of Śiva as the plenitude of eternal and immortal bliss. In relation to the yogī it describes the introverted experience he undergoes in terms of which he simultaneously experiences within himself both the cosmic manifestation (*vikāsa*) and its dissolution (*saṁkoca*). Both these states have been described as being characterized by the opening (*unmīlana*) and the closing (*nimīlana*) of the eyelids. A perfect yogī (*siddha*) is said to be the one who experiences both these conditions at will.

Although Śiva represents the principle of consciousness, yet consciousness without the power of reflection (*vimarśa*) is as inert as a stone. Accordingly the *tāntrikas* think of Śiva as being like a dead corpse apart from Śakti. It is the Kuṇḍalinī-Śakti which imparts life to Śiva, and so She is seen as constituting the life of Śiva. Even in the manifest condition the Divine Couple do not remain apart from each other, as one without the other cannot exist. At the iconographic level, this unity is visualized in the concept of Śiva as being one-half male and the other-half female. It is the principle of *ardhanārīśvara* which explains this symbiotic union of Śiva and Śakti. At the philosophical level, the unity of the two is explained by the concept of *bhairava.* Giving an esoteric interpretation to the concept of *bhairava,* we are told that the term consists of *bha, ra,* and *va: bha* means maintenance of the manifest (*bharaṇa*); *ra* means the dissolution of the manifest (*ravana*), and *va* denotes the emission (*vamana*) of the manifest.[13] By ascribing these three cosmic functions to Bhairava, *tāntrikas* thereby arrive at the conclusion that these functions can be actualized by possessing a power (*śakti*) that is innate to the possessor of power. Thus Bhairava as the ultimate metaphyscial point of reference is characterized by the union of light and reflection, Śiva and Śakti, Bhairava and Bhairavī. The male aspect denotes the transcendence of Śiva, whereas the female aspect denotes his immanence.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF KUṆḌALINĪ

Tāntrikas have made a tripartite division of Kuṇḍalinī in relation to the three levels of manifestation.[14] The three aspects of the Kuṇḍalinī are known as the *parā-kuṇḍalinī, cit-kuṇḍalinī.* and the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī.* It is the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* which, through the *śakti-kuṇḍalinī,* gives rise to the manifest realm by condensing Śiva into the finite entities. The state which the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* represents is that of absolute unity, as no bifurfication whatsoever at this supreme level (*anuttara*) occurs in Being. As the innate Energy of Śiva, the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* is spoken of as that power through which the manifestational emission (*visarga*) occurs, and accordingly is represented by the two dots one upon the other (:), denoting thereby the Divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti. The two dots esoterically mean the revealing and concealing aspects of Śiva.[15]

When the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* engages in creative activity, She projects her creativity through three phases. It is on account of her absolute freedom (*svātantrya*) that She is empowered to give rise to the objective universe. Prior to the acutal manifestation, the innate freedom of the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* gets externalized (*bahiramukhya*) in terms of which the fertilized seed is to be ejected. In the second phase the process of emission is initiated, and is actualized in the third phase when the freedom or will of the Absolute is objectivized. It is the innate freedom of the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* which is seen as the main cause of the emission of the manifest.

It is the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* which constitutes the absolute freedom as well as will of Śiva. It is the will which, while emitting the manifest, is spoken of as the Energy of Śiva. The *parā-kuṇḍalinī,* at the metaphysical level, represents the essential nature of the Absolute. Upon manifesting the manifestable, the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* transforms herself into a sleeping snake, and this aspect of her is known as the *śakti-kuṇḍalinī.* It is as *śakti-kuṇḍalinī* that the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* is said to be the source of light (*prakāśa*) of consciousness.[16] By "light" is meant that power by which consciousness reveals itself as well as that upon which its light falls. This light as knowledge expresses itself in five forms, namely, as the light of sound (*śabda*), as the light of taste (*sparśa*), as the light of form (*rūpa*), as the light of touch (*sparśa*), and as the light of smell (*gandha*).

These five aspects correspond to the five sensations of seeing, of touch, of hearing, of taste, and of smell.[17] This creative aspect of *parā-kuṇḍalinī,* that is, as *śakti-kuṇḍalinī,* consists of the seventeen digits of the moon (*kalā*), which is the embodiment of the supreme nectar.[18]

The *parā-kuṇḍalinī,* on account of her transcendence as well as unlimitedness, is not experienced by the yogī to the extent he remains subject to the laws of the body. How can the finite being experience that which is infinite? The limited body of the individual has no capacity of experiencing that which is of cosmic nature. It is at the time of physical death that a yogī is enabled to have the experience of the *parā-kuṇḍalinī.* When, however, the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* is experienced, She is experienced through internal *samādhi* as being one with the world. This state of unification between the internal and the external, between the transcendent and the immanent, is technically termed as *krama-mudrā.* The bliss that emerges from this experience is of cosmic nature[19] (*jagadānanda*). What differentiates the experience of the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* from that of *cit-kuṇḍalinī* and *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* is this: Upon the arosual of the Kuṇḍalinī the energy of the breath that enters the Central Vein does not touch the six mystical wheels that are along the spinal cord. Rather it goes upwards without any impediment. In the case of the *cit-kuṇḍalinī* or of the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* the energy of the breath (*prāṇa-śakti*) has to penetrate the six mystical centres so that the path for the Kuṇḍalinī may be cleared of all obstructions.

Next to the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* is the *cit-kuṇḍalinī,* which is that aspect of Energy which makes beings conscious. The *cit-kuṇḍalinī* is experienced by a yogī by employing the various methods of meditation. One of the methods is that of *cakrodaya,* which consists of in meditating upon the central point of conjunction of incoming and outgoing breaths. The centre (*madhyamā*) as the "void" (*śūnya*) represents, the unimpeded freedom of the Absolute.[20] It is by meditating upon this centre that the yogī introverts his consciousness so deeply that it ultimately results in his experiencing the *cit-kuṇḍalinī.* The process of introversion begins in this manner: A yogī, through meditative concentration, enters the point of conjunction that exists between the two moments or thoughts, two actions, or the two states of consciousness like sleep and deep sleep. With the deepening of introversion of consciousness slows down the rate of pulse, the circulation of blood, and the breathing movement. There also emerges a crawling sensation as well as the humming sound of a bee. This crawling sensation produces an experience which is of the nature of intense delight.

Before dwelling upon the content of the humming sound, let us describe the esoteric physiology of Tantrism. Tantrism believes in the existence of a Central Vein, called the *suṣumnā.* This Vein is located in the interior void of the spinal cord, and to its left and right are the two other veins, called the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā,*[21] through which the normal inhalation and exhalation flows. Along the Central Vein are the six mystical centres (*śakti-cakras*).[22] The coiled Kuṇḍalinī, upon her arousal, moves upwards by penetrating these six wheels of energy till She reaches the top of the skull where She merges in the Supreme Consciousness, which is Śiva. The arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī is caused by the breaths which the yogī, through the method of concentration upon the central point or through the recitation of *mantras,*[23] gets into the Central Vein.

The arising of the humming sound continues for some time, and finally is made to move to the right side of the passage of the breath. Upon having accomplished this task the yogī, through intense concentration, transforms the movement of breath (*prāṇa*) into life-force (*prāṇanā*). It is the life-force, and not the breath, which we inhale and exhale. This life-force descends, through the Central Vein, downwards till it reaches the lowest wheel of energy called the root-*cakra*. It is in the root-*cakra* where the Kuṇḍalinī lies asleep in the form of a coiled snake. Upon reaching the root-*cakra*, the life-force gives rise to the similar experience of crawling sensation which occurs when the breath is pushed into the Central Vein. The experience of crawling sensation in the lowest wheel is similar to, if not identical with, the delight that is experienced at the height of sexual orgasm. This experience of bliss allows the yogī to think of himself as being of the nature of bliss.

A *tāntrika* adept is warned against the continuation of the flow of this bliss that emerges upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī and due to the reaching of the life-force (*prāṇanā*) to the root-*cakra*. Also the ascent of the Kuṇḍalinī, and thereby the penetration of the six mystical centres, cannot be accomplished unless favoured by the preceptor. It is due to the favour of the preceptor, so we are told, that the Kuṇḍalinī is aroused. The Kuṇḍalinī, upon her arousal, traverses upwards by penetrating the various wheels of energy till She reaches the fifth wheel of energy called the *bhrūmadhya,* which exists in the middle of the two eyebrows. When the *cit-kuṇḍalinī* penetrates the sixth *cakra* the yogī breathes out, and subsequently the movement of breath comes to a point of standstill. All the parts of the body become lifeless. When the Kuṇḍalinī reaches the *brahmarandhra,* which is the ultimate destiny of the Kuṇḍalinī, life returns to the body, and the yogī experiences the pervasion of the *cit-*

kuṇḍalinī throughout the Central Vein. While experiencing the all-pervasive presence of the Kuṇḍalinī from the *mūlādhāra* to the *brahmarandhra*, the yogī momentarily breathes out, and subsequently opens his eyelids. This breathing out and the opening of the eyelids is repeated for a considerable period of time, and is interpreted as denoting the externalization of awareness that had been introverted. The externalization and the internalization of awareness becomes, with the passage of time, natural to the yogī. In whatever condition he may be, the yogī experiences the cosmic presence of the Kuṇḍalinī, and thereby tastes the flavour of the bliss that is equated with the immortal nectar (*soma*). The experiencing of bliss inwardly and outwardly is spoken of as the state of *krama-mudrā*, or the sequential posture.

Technically the opening and closing of the eyelids is spoken of as the *nimīlana-samādhi* and the *unmīlana-samādhi*. These two conditions of *samādhi* also denote the twofold movement of expansion (*vikāsa*) of the cosmic manifestation as well as its withdrawal or contraction (*saṁkoca*), which the yogī,[24] upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī, experiences within. Upon reaching the final state of soteric liberation, a yogī experiences the bliss of liberative freedom while still living a bodily existence. Henceforward the yogī continuously lives in the state of liberative bliss. The arousal of the *cit-kuṇḍalinī*, and thereby the realization of the state of *krama-mudrā*, cannot be accomplished unless favoured by the guru, which in theological terms denotes grace.

Next to the *cit-kuṇḍalinī* is the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī*. When the *parā-kuṇḍalinī* begins the process of manifestation, it gives rise to the life-force (*prāṇanā*). It is upon the emergence of the breath of life that the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* comes into being. Further the life-foce manifests or becomes operative through the five breaths, which are *prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna,* and *vyāna*.[25] Upon the completion of cosmic manifestation, Kuṇḍalinī gets atomized and remains as a latent force in the human body as a coiled snake. It is the aim of a yogī to awaken the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* from her slumber.[26] There are two types of yogīs: one who is totally given to the pursuit of liberation and the other who, instead of liberation, seeks pleasure. In the case of the former the traversing of the Kuṇḍalinī takes place upto the *brahmarandhra* where She is fused with the Supreme Consciousness, whereas in the case of the latter She rises only upto the *bhrūmadhya*. Upon reaching this wheel of energy, the yogī thereby realizes the eight occult powers.[27]

The method of awakening the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* is the same which is employed in the case of *cit-kuṇḍalinī*, that is, by fixing attention on the central point from where the breaths originate. One of the methods, as described in the *Spandakārikā,* is to enter the central point of breaths, which is closed to the one who is given to the ordinary pursuits (*vyavahāra*) of life. It is by concentrating upon the energy of consciousness in the central channel, which is also known as the upward path (*ūrdhva-mārga*). By concentrating upon the upward path, the incoming breath, called in esoteric terms as the moon (*candra*), and the outgoing breath, called the sun (*sūrya*), enter the Central Vein and rush thereupon downwards (*adhomukha*). Upon reaching the root-*cakra*, the breaths cause the awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī. Upon her arousal, She moves upwards towards the *brahmarandhra*[28] where She, through an opening, leaves the body by burying herself in the Supreme Consciousness, which also is called the Sky of Consciousness (*cid-ākāśa*). At this point the movement of breathing comes to a standstill. This state can be maintained to the extent a yogī keeps his concentration fixed upon the central point. The moment attention is diverted, that very moment the yogī falls into the state of the void, which is termed as the state of dissolution (*pralayākala*). Even in this state of the void the thoughts of the yogī are not filled with the empirical objectivity. The yogī, however, does not stay for long in this state of the void. He opens his eyes, and thereby becomes an ordinary person.

The other method consists of in pushing the incoming breath into the Central Vein and letting initially descend it a little downward. Then both the breaths are collected together at the point from where they may slip down to the root-*cakra*. The point at which the breaths are collected is known as the *lambikā*.[29] When the two breaths are collected and are ready to descend downward, that very moment breathing stops, and consequently a choking sensation is experienced. It is at this point that the right side of the *lambikā* opens up and lets the breath descend through the Central Vein, whereas the left side remains blocked. It is through deep concentration that this passage is opened up so that the collected breaths may reach the root-*cakra*.

Upon the entry of the breath into the Central Vein through the *lambikā*, there arises a sound vibration, which is similar to the one that is experienced upon the closing of the ears. Upon reaching the lowest *cakra*, the breaths cause the awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī, and subsequently the wheel of energy is penetrated. The penetration of the wheel means that the wheel begins to revolve clockwise at the speed that is difficult to imagine. It is the first experience that the yogī has upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī.

The breath, upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī, that had slipped down becomes one with the Kuṇḍalinī. From the lowest mystical centre the Kuṇḍalinī moves upwards towards the centre that is in the navel (*nābhi*). Upon reaching the *nābhi-cakra,* Kuṇḍalinī penetrates it, and subsequently makes it rotate like a wheel. At this time the yogī experiences as if the two wheels of the *mūlādhāṛa* and the *nābhi* are moving simultaneously. Both the wheels, while rotating, cause the production of sound, which is of pleasing nature.

From the navel the Kuṇḍalinī moves to the heart-*cakra* (*hṛt-cakra*). Upon penetrating the wheel, the Kuṇḍalinī makes it to rotate alongwith the other two wheels. The yogī experiences the rotation of all the three wheels. He even has the experience of the spokes of the wheel. From the heart Kuṇḍalinī moves onto the throat (*kaṇṭha*) and then to the *bhrūmadhya-cakra.* The Kuṇḍalinī does not move any further for the yogī who seeks worldly pleasure and power. The Kuṇḍalinī moves to the top of the skull in the case of yogīs who are desirous only of liberative freedom. Upon reaching the top of the head, the Kuṇḍalinī attains to the undifferentiated condition by merging in Śiva. It is this unification of Śiva and Śakti which is equated with the conjnunction that occurs between the couple in the process of a sexual intercourse, and the resultant bliss is termed as "the celebration of supreme union" (*mahāmelāpa*). This bliss is termed as being of the nature of nectar, and in drinking this immortal nectar the yogī reaches the ultimate soteric goal of freedom.

There are cases where the arousing of the Kuṇḍalinī has taken place in reverse order. When the energy of the breath reaches the root-*cakra* through the Central Vein, the Kuṇḍalinī does not move upwards from this centre to the *brahmarandhra.* Rather the yogī experiences the descent of the energy of breath from the *bhrūmadhya* down to the *mūlādhāra.* This reverse arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī is spoken of as being of ghostly nature (*piśācāveśa*). The arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī in reverse order does not benefit the yogī. It may prove fatal to his well-being.

Upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī, She moves upwards, and while ascending upwards, She penetrates the various wheels of energy. This process is known as the piercing initiation (*vedha-dīkṣā*).[30] The kind of penetration that takes place is determined by the disposition of the yogī. The penetration of the wheels of energy is explained by Abhinavagupta thus:

> This initiation of penetration is described in different ways in the Tantras. Here the yogī has to experience the initiation of penetration when he rises from one *cakra* to another and simultaneously experiences these *cakras* in

> motion. (Finally) by this (penetration) the eight powers of Yoga are possessed by the yogīs.[31]

The number of penetrations is said to be six, and each one of them, in accordance with the disposition of a yogī, gives rise to a particular kind of experience. The first penetration is known as the *mantra-vedha.* This penetration occurs in such yogīs who are desirous of the fullness of I-consciousness, and accordingly in them arises the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī* in the form of a *mantra.* A *mantra* could be *Oṁ, Śiva, ahaṁ, so'ahaṁ,* etc. Upon the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī as a *mantra,* a yogī experiences as if he is actually non-different from the Kuṇḍalinī itself. Further the breath of the yogī is permeated by the ecstasy of joy, and consequently this joyful breath penetrates all the *cakras* from the *mūlādhāra* to the *sahasrāra.*

The second penetrating initiation is called the *nāda-vedha.* This penetration occurs in yogīs who desire to lead people to the soteric freedom. The arising of Kuṇḍalinī in such yogīs occurs in the form of sound (*nāda*). And the sound that a yogī hears is that of a drum. As the sound is the basis of the spoken speech, so it is through the articulation of the word that the yogī explains the nature of the Absolute.

The third penetration is called the *bindu-vedha,* and occurs in the yogī who seeks worldly pleasures and the attainment of occult powers. In the yogī of such a type the joyful breath is transformed into semen (*bindu, vīrya*). What the yogī experiences, upon the arousal of the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī,* is pervasion of semen from the *mūlādhāra* to the *sahasrāra.* The joy that comes to be on account of the presence of semen is equivalent to joy that occurs when sexual orgasm is experienced.

The fourth kind of penetration is called the *śākta-vedha,* and occurs in the yogī who is desirous of being strong both mentally and physically. The movement of the Kuṇḍalinī, upon her arousal, from the *mūlādhāra* to the *sahasrāra* is like that of an ant. The yogī experiences the transformation of breath into pure energy, and consequently thinks of himself as an embodiment of Energy itself. Even the sound that arises, due to the movement of the Kuṇḍalinī, is of the nature of an electric current.

The fifth penetration is called the *bhujaṅga-vedha,* and occurs in the yogī who believes that the Kuṇḍalinī is of the form of a serpent. The rising of the Kuṇḍalinī occurs in the form of a snake. The snake, when stretching upwards, keeps its tail in the *mūlādhāra.*

Finally, we have the penetration called the *parā-vedha,* the supreme penetration. This penetration occurs in the yogī who wants nothing but the experience of unity with Śiva.

REFERENCES

1. All the yogic manuals have classified the breaths into five types, *prāṇa, apāna, udāna, samāna,* and *vyāna.* If viewed externally, *prāṇa* is the outgoing breath, and is said to be flowing through the mystical vein called *īḍā. Apāna* likewise denotes the incoming breath, and flows in the body through the *piṅgalā* vein. The *udāna* breath comes into being upon the union of the first two breaths and, like *prāṇa,* is said to be the outgoing breath, and flows in the body through the Central Vein (*suṣumnā*). The last two breaths—*samāna* and *vyāna*—keep the body, while flowing through it, alive. Some of these breaths correspond to different levels of manifestation as well as to different meditative states. In the fifth chapter of the *T.Sā.* the correspondence between the breaths and the different states of consciousness is stated thus:

   > When one wants to emit breath (*prāṇam uccicārayiṣuḥ*), he first rests in the void of the heart. Then he does the same outside with the ascending breath (*prāṇa*). Then, with the moon becoming full, that is, with the descending breath (*apāna*), he sees himself identified with the whole external world and thus becomes indifferent to everything. When, thereafter, the equalizing breath (*samāna*) appears, he experiences a rest (*viśrānti*) in the friction and fusion (of the entire manifestation). When the fire of the ascending breath (*udāna*) appears, all distinctions between the knower, the known, and so forth, are devoured. Finally, when the pervading breath (*vyāna*) comes and this devouring fire subsides, he shines, free of all limitations.

   In the *TĀ* (6.8) we are informed that consciousness actualizes the process of manifestation by taking the form of *prāṇa,* that is, the breath that enlivens everything with life. It is the energy of breath which is identical with the primal vibration (*spanda*), which is always pulsating with a radiance (*sphurattā*), and so shines as the consciousness of all.
2. *Netratantra* (hereinafter cited as *NT*), 8.11.
3. The two breaths—*prāṇa* and *apāna*—are the symbols of the day and the night, and so neither the day nor the night are seen to be appropriate for meditation. Rather the time for meditation is that point of conjunction where the day and the night meet.
4. *NT,* 8.12-13.
5. *Tāntrikas* hold the view that the single movement of breath, from the point of its origin in the heart to its ending point, occupies a space of sixteen *tuṭis.* There are times when the breath, particularly when one is either afraid or runs very fast, occupies a space of seventeen *tuṭis.*
6. A *tuṭi* is equivalent to a space which is occupied by two and a quarter fingers laid side by side horizontally.
7. *NT,* 18.13-14.
8. Ibid., 8.14; *Yogasūtra,* 1.48.
9. Ibid., 8.16.

10. The number of coils the Kuṇḍalinī has, while in the state of rest at the root-*cakra*, are three and a half. The first coil is the symbol of consciousness (that is, of Śiva), which relates itself to that which is objective. Thus the first coil stands for the knower (*pramātā*). The second coil symbolizes the process of knowing. The third explains the subjective aspect of the knowing consciousness. The half coil denotes that point of consciousness (*pramiti*) in which the traces of objectivity stand dissolved.
11. There are some Tantras which give the number of wheels of energy (*cakras*) as eight, and some other texts speak of six wheels. Since the six wheels are well known, so we stick to them. They are the *mūlādhāra, nābhi, hṛt, kaṇṭha, bhrūmadhya,* and *sahasrāra*. The last one is also known as the *sahasrārdha* (thousand-spoked) or the *brahmarandhra* (the knot of *brahman*).
12. The concept of the middle or the central point has its origin in the Middle Way doctrine of the Buddha. For the Middle Way denotes the avoidance of extremes, whether ethical or doctrinal. The Mahāyānists, however, linked it to another doctrine of Buddha, namely, the doctrine of dependent origination. As everything arises by depending upon everything, so it means that all originates have no intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). Lack of self-nature has been interpreted to mean Emptiness. Thus Emptiness is identified with the Ultimate. For the *tāntrikas* the void (*śūnya* = *madhyamā*) denotes the origin and end of everything. Void also denotes the ultimate freedom that is unimpeded. It is on account of innate freedom that the conjunction of Śiva and Śakti results in the emission and resorption of the manifest. The principle of freedom is both initiated and actualized by the inherent power that is constitutive of Śiva. In relation to meditation the point of origin as well as the end-point of breathing is considered as the central point. It is by fixing one's awareness upon this point that a *tāntrika* succeeds in deepening his introversion.
13. See for further details on the concept of *bhairava, TĀ,* 3.283-85.
14. It is the triadic conceptuality that forms the metaphysical base of Trika Tantrism. The three aspects of the Absolute are the supreme (*parā*), intermediate (*parāpara*), and the gross (*aparā*), representing unity, unity-in-diversity, and diversity. In terms of powers the above aspects correspond to will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). It is the exercise of these powers of the Absolute that give rise to the manifest. Upon the emergence of the manifest there arises the tripartite ontic hierarchy in terms of the Lord (*pati*), the bound soul (*paśu*), and bondage (*pāśa*). This tripartite division in relation to the Word is characterized by the Supreme Word (*parā-vāk*), by Seeing (*paśyanti*), by the Middle (*madhyamā*), and by the Gross (*vaikharī*). It relation to the Kuṇḍalinī the tripartite division consists of the *parā-kuṇḍalinī, cit-kuṇḍalinī,* and the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī.*
15. When Śiva condenses himself through self-manifestation into the finite

objects, and thereby conceals his essential nature, it is called Anuttara Śiva. When Śiva dissolves the entities by resorbing them into himself, it is called Maheśvara Śiva.

16. The term "light", when used by the Trika *tāntrikas,* has a double meaning. Whenever the light of sensation or of any congnizing faculty is spoken of, it means the knowledge of that sensation or of cognizing faculty. The other meaning is the act of sensing itself.
17. While giving rise to "light", She undergoes no change in herself. She remains indivisible. The phenomenal diversity emerges upon the ejection of the seed. It is like the electric current or energy that expresses itself in different ways without undergoing any change in itself.
18. In Tantrism the manifest world is linked to the fifteen phases (*kalās*) of the moon, and these phases correspond to the first fifteen vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet. The sixteenth *kalā* is the *visarga,* that is, the power of emission. It is pronounced as *ḥ* and written in the form of two dots one upon the other (:). In relation to the moon the sixteenth phase is known as *amakalā* on account it being irreducible. It is this phase which is present during the dark phase of the moon. The seventeenth phase of the moon represents the flowing out of the immortal nectar which occurs in the skull upon the union of the Kuṇḍalinī and Śiva. This phase is called the seventeenth on account of it having nothing to do with that is objective.
19. *TĀ*, 3.138.
20. *Svacchandatantra,* 4.288-90.
21. These two mystical veins have been personified as the Goddess, and accordingly are offered worship. They have also been identified with the sacred rivers of Jamunā and Sarasvatī.
22. The *tāntrika* of Śrīvidyā school accepts the existence of eight wheels of energy, whereas the Kaula *tāntrika* accepts only six. Further the Kaula does not conceive of these *cakras* as being in the shape of lotus.
23. There is a close relationship between the sound (*nāda*), the breath (*prāṇa*), and the *mantra.* A *mantra* is a combination of various sounds. It is breath, when uttered (*uccāra*), that gives rise to a *mantra* by giving expression to an inarticulate or silent sound. It is in the primal sound in which all the letters (*varṇa*) of Sanskrit alphabet exist. When the primal sound takes the form of breath (*prāṇa*), we have inhalation and exhalation. *Tāntrikas* assume that every breath is exhaled with the sound *sa* and every inhaled breath with the sound *ha.* The finite being, thus, endlessly utters with the outgoing and incoming breath the *mantra: haṁsaḥ.* The *mantra* accordingly is called the *prāṇic-mantra.* It is the spontaneous utterance of the *mantra* that is termed as *japa.*

    How does a *mantra,* it may be asked, help the yogī in arousing the sleeping Kuṇḍalinī? When the primal sound (*parāvāni*) expresses itself as the spoken speech (*vaikharī*), it descends downwards through the stages of seeing, intermediate, and gross. In the case of recitation of the *mantra,* the process is reverse to that of manifestation or descent. It is a process of resorption, and starts from the gross and ends in the primal sound by ascending the stages of the middle and seeing.

Upon practising the recitation of the *mantra,* there comes a time when the vocal recitation is needed no more. Rather the activity of recitation becomes automatic, and this is called *ajapa.* With *japa* having becoming *ajapa,* there is realized equilibrium between inhalation and exhalation, which as *prāṇa* and *apāna* otherwise move in a counterlinear manner along the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* veins. The equiliberated currents of *prāṇa* and *apāna* flow into the Central Vein (*suṣumnā*), and thereby is the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī caused. With the arousal of the Kuṇḍalinī, the life-force moves upwards through the Central Vein—and this ascendent movement is called the *uccāraṇa.* Ultimately the Kuṇḍalinī, while traversing the spinal cord, reaches the *brahmarandhra.* It is upon reaching this spot of the Kuṇḍalinī that the emerging sound ceases, as it gets transformed into light (*joyti*), which is the immortal nectar. See *TĀ,* 5.131-32; 6.217; *Svacchandatantra,* 5.131; *VB,* vv. 2-7, 155-57.

24. While the Kuṇḍalinī moves upwards, there occurs within the yogī the dissolution of the categories of existence which are constitutive of the manifest realm. The dissolution of the elements or of categories is called the *bhūtaśuddhi.*
25. The physiological functions of the five breaths are the following: *prāṇa* is the outgoing breath, whereas *apāna* is the incoming breath, and functions as that force by which urine and excrement are thrown out of the body. The *samāna* breath fuctions as the balancing power between the vital channels and the nervous system, whereas *udāna* functions as that power by which food is digested. It is the *vyāna* breath which stimulates the entire body and keeps it functioning.
26. It is assumed by the *tāntrikas* that the *prāṇa-śakti* ceaselessly vibrates as *ha* in the *suṣumnā,* and is accordingly called the *anāhata-nāda,* i.e., the unstruck sound. This sound is identified with *haṁsa* or the *prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī.*
27. The eight occult powers (*aṣṭasiddhi*) are the power to become invisible (*aṇimā*), the power to become huge in size and weight (*mahimā*), the power to become as light as a particle of dust (*laghimā*), the power to become as heavy as a mountain (*garimā*), the power to gain control over the will of others (*īśitva*), the power to be simultaneously at two places (*prāpti*), the power to gain control over the biological and psychological needs (*prākāmya*), and the power to become attractive and pleasing (*vaśitva*).
28. It is maintained that at the top of the skull exists an opening, and it is through this opening that the Kuṇḍalinī leaves the body, and thereby frees herself from the atomized condition in which She finds herself in the human body.

29. There is a centre, called *tālu,* in the upper part of the mouth which is known as the *lambikā-sthāna,* or the place of *lambikā.*
30. The piercing initiation emerges on account of the movement of the Kuṇḍalinī upwards and not because of the favour of the guru.
31. *TĀ,* 29.237-38.

APPENDIX B

A Note on the Śivasūtra

As the *Śivasūtra* or the Aphorisms of Śiva is the foundational text of Trika Śaivism of Kashmir, so accordingly the followers of Trika tradition consider this text to be of divine origin, and thereby accord it the status of a revelatory text. A text, from a theological viewpoint, that is of divine nature and is of the nature of revelation, is thought to be eternal, and therefore is seen to be transcendent to that is phenomenal, which means that such a text is to be considered a non-originate. It amounts to saying that a revelatory text has necessarily to be ahistorical and atemporal. The divine origin or non-historicity of a revealed text does not mean that it is totally immune to the vageries of time. Whatever be the theological interpretation of a revealed text, we know this much that such a text exists in space and time and is communicated in a language that has a definite historical origin, and so may be said to be finite. It is in the context of this reasoning that the authorship of the *Śivasūtra* has been ascribed to the sage Vasugupta. In theological terms the text may have been revealed by Śiva to Vasugupta, but, from a historical viewpoint, the text owes its existence to a definite historical person, namely, to Vasugupta. Insofar as the mode of communicating revelation that is contained in the text is concerned, there are various accounts, and about which we shall be dealing below. Whatever the account of revelation may be, it has always to be of mythic origin, as such an account makes it possible for revelation to be transhistorical. Moreover, mythic accounts always deal with that is supernatural and non-phenomenal. Concerning the author of the text, namely, Vasugupta, we know very little. We know definitely this much that he was the spiritual preceptor of Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa who, according to Kalhaṇa,[1] was not only a perfect yogī (*siddha*), but also adorned the court of King Avantivarman. As Avantivarman reigned between AD 855 and 883, so Vasugupta must have lived during the first half of the ninth century.

Upon analyzing the text of the *Śivasūtra* we come to know that Vasugupta was a yogī of the highest order. As a recluse yogī, he seems to have preferred the solitude of the forest over the hustle-and-bustle of the city. As the revelatory place of the *Śivasūtra* is believed to have been the Mahādeva mountain, so it is but natural to infer that Vasugupta must have lived either in this mountain or down below in the valley. The place has its own natural charm and beauty. As a place of solitude, it is very suitable for mendicants or for them who are desirous of sharpening their spiritual faculties by delving deep into the mysteries of existence. As Vasugupta was both a mendicant yogī as well as a philosopher, so Mahādeva mountain seems to have suited him best. In such a place he could, without any external disturbance, pursue his spiritual as well as philosophical pursuits.

There are various traditions to be found concerning the mode of revelation of the *Śivasūtra*. Whatever be the tradition, the aim is to establish beyond doubt the revelatory character of the *Śivasūtra*. Since the goal is supermundane, so the description of revelation has to be such that authenticates its supernatural nature. This is accomplished by inserting the direct intervention of divine agency, namely, of Śiva. In order to transcend the rules of logic and of reason, it is necessary to resort to myth, as myth never operates within the realm of logical reasoning. That which is of supernatural nature has to be beyond the space-time causality, and so beyond human thinking.

All the different traditions concerning the origin of the *Śivasūtra* are engaged in authenticating the divine nature of the text. These traditions, at the empirical level of thought, may appear to be contradicting each other, but, at the transcendent level, the logical contradictions are resolved in the synthesis of sameness that is non-contradictory. It is at the transcendent level that all opposites and contradictions coincide. As the empirical law of contradiction is inapplicable to the Transcendent, so the Transcendent has necessarily to be free of contradictions. Accordingly the mythic account of revelation, when looked at from the transcendent perspective, does not seem to be containing the contradictions that are visible to the empirical eye. What this amounts to saying is that the empirical measurement of correctness or incorrectness cannot be applied to the supernatural. It is assumed that the supernatural *a priori* transcends the natural, which means that the supernatural can never be apprehended in terms of empirical reasoning. It is for this reason that the Transcendent has been equated with the ineffable, that is, with the *mysterium*. The

Transcendent, thus, has been termed as being of the nature of wonder (*camatkāra*).

There are, as already pointed out, various traditions concerning the divine origin of the *Śivasūtra*. One of the tradition owes its existence to Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa. Kallaṭa was not only a direct disciple of Vasugupta, but was also an accomplished yogī (*siddha*). The tradition that stems from him maintains that Vasugupta had a dream on the Mahādeva mountain. While in dream, Śiva himself is said to have appeared to him. Further the tradition maintains that Śiva transmitted the entire text of the *Śivasūtra* to Vasugupta during the period of dream. Whether it is possible for a person to remember the entire text that has been revealed in a dream is a question that can never reasonably be answered. As such accounts pertain to faith, so it is futile to find an answer of such a question in terms of logical reasoning. To overcome the logical hurdles the element of myth is inserted with the intention of fortifying the faith of the believer. Also the myth is made use of for describing the operations of the supernatural in terms of wonder.

There is another tradition concerning the divine origin of the *Śivasūtra*. This tradition has been initiated by Rājānaka Rāma and Bhagvadutpala in their respective commentaries on the *Stanzas on Vibration* (*Spandakārikā*).[2] This line of tradition received further impetus from Bhāskara in his commentary on the *Śivasūtra*, namely, the *Śivasūtravārttika*.[3] This tradition does not subscribe to the view that Śiva directly transmitted the text to Vasugupta in the dream. The tradition, instead, asserts the direct authorship of the text to Śiva. Vasugupta is supposedly said to have learnt the text from some Siddha on the Mahādeva mountain. The relationship that occurs between the revealer of the text and the recipient of revelation, according to Bhagvadutpala, is that that exists between human beings. This relation is exactly the same which occurs between a Siddha and an ordinary person.[4]

There is, apart from the above two, a third line of tradition with regard to the authorship of the *Śivasūtra*. This third line of tradition stems from Kṣemarāja's commentary on the *Śivasūtra*, namely, the *Vimarśinī*. Vasugupta, according to Kṣemarāja, was a Siddha. As a recluse Siddha, he lived in the Mahādeva mountain. As a reflective thinker, he had immersed himself in sound traditions, which for Kṣemarāja also meant rejection of such spiritual traditions that were considered by the Śaivites as being of inferior quality. The inferior traditions, for all practical purposes, denoted nothing else than the spiritual traditions which the Buddhist schools embodied, particularly the one which Nāgabodhi represented.[5]

Insofar as the mode of revelation is concerned, it is described thus. One night Śiva is supposed to have appeared in a dream to Vasugupta. While in dream, Śiva told him to search for a rock on the Mahādeva mountain. Further he was informed that on the other side of the rock he would find the text of the *Śivasūtra* inscribed. Upon coming out of the dream, Vasugupta went to the spot indicated in the dream. On reaching the spot, he found a huge boulder. The boulder turned over when he touched it. What a wonderful experience awaited Vasugupta when he found the text of the *Śivasūtra* inscribed on the other side of the rock.[6]

While explaining the origin of the *Śivasūtra*, Kṣemarāja, too, resorts to myth as the best non-logical explanation. Thus he, too, follows the time-tested theological tradition of explaining events that cannot be explained within the framework of space-time causality. How else could one explain the divine origin of a text except by linking it to mythic thinking. It is this tradition concerning the origin of the *Śivasūtra* that is prevalent among the Kashmiri Hindus. The Mahādeva mountain is still thought to be sacred by the faithful on account of it being the place where the text of *Śivasūtra* had been revealed by Śiva. Although the rock is still existing, yet the inscribed text of the *Śivasūtra* is not to be found there.

Insofar as the text of the *Śivasūtra* is concerned, it consists of two recensions, which differ slightly from each other. One of them has been commented upon by Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara, and the other by Kṣemarāja.[7] The approach of both the commentators to the text differs radically from each other, and so one is compelled to arrive at the conclusion that both of them represent two different theological traditions. Whatever the theological differences the two traditions may represent, yet both the commentators have divided the text of the *Śivasūtra* into three sections, and thereby affirm the tradition that the division of the text must have originated from Vasugupta itself. The three sections of the text, according to Bhāskara, are the following:

1. Explanation concerning the nature of the Light of Cosmic Consciousness (*Sāmānyacitprakāśasvarūpa-nirūpaṇa*).
2. The Emergence of Knowledge that is Innate (*sahajavidyodaya*).
3. The Vibration of the Powers (*vibhūtispanda*).

Kṣemarāja has not given any name to any section. Instead he has divided the text in accordance with the three methods (*upāya*) of liberation. This division is based upon the classification of the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta. Kṣemarāja has named the three sections of the text thus:

1. The Vibration of One's Own Nature (*svarūpaspanda*).
2. The Vibration of the Emergence of Innate Knowledge (*sahajavidyodayaspanda*).
3. The Vibration of the Powers (*vibhūtispanda*).

These headings of Kṣemarāja parallel those of Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara. These headings of both the commentators must be seen in the context of relationship that exists between the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā*. As to what kind of relationship exists between these two texts will be analyzed at an appropriate place. As to whether the *Spandakārikā* was composed by Vasugupta or by Kallaṭa or whether the former is a commentary on the latter is immaterial. What is of importance is the fact that the two texts, in one way or the other, are related to each other. And all the commentators affirm that the two texts have a direct bearing upon each other. Accordingly Bhagvadutpala testifies to this explicit relationship in his commentary on the *Spandakārikā*, namely, the *Spandapradīpikā*. According to him, the *Spandakārikā* contains, in a capsule form, the secret teachings of the *Śivasūtra*.[8] Although ascribing the authorship of the *Spandakārikā* to Vasugupta, Kṣemarāja maintains that he wrote this text in order to summarize the teachings of the *Śivasūtra*.[9]

Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara maintains that the above two texts are intimately related to each other. It would be a mistake, according to him, to think of the *Spandakārikā* as a mere synopsis of the teachings of the *Śivasūtra*. For him the *Spandakārikā* is a full-fledged explanation on the first three sections of the *Śivasūtra*. He also affirms that Kallaṭa wrote a separate commentary, called the *Tattvārthacintāmaṇi*, on the fourth section of the *Śivasūtra*, which is no more available. Abhinavagupta supports Bhāskara in maintaining that Kallaṭa wrote two separate commentaries, namely, the *Madhuvāhinī* and the *Tattvārthacintāmaṇi*, on the *Śivasūtra*.[10] That Kallaṭa definitely wrote a commentary on the *Śivasūtra* may be inferred from the fact that Abhinava quotes from it. As this quote of Abhinava is not from the *Spandakārikā*, so it must necessarily be from Kallaṭa's commentary on the *Śivasūtra*.[11]

Although all the commentators may have affirmed the strong affiliation of the two texts, namely, the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā*, yet it is not clear in what sense this relationship exists between the two texts. The *Spandakārikā* cannot be seen as a commentarial work. Also it cannot be maintained that the two texts depend on each other. The relationship between the two texts can be established if the *Śivasūtra* is seen as the first exposition of Trika Śaivism of Kashmir. It is the Trika Śaivism that may be viewed as the supreme synthesis of all the currents of thought that preceded or succeeded the *Śivasūtra*.[12] This synthesis reached its climax in Abhinavagupta who, through his genius, showed as to how the various Tāntric traditions could be brought together in the synthetic womb of the Trika.

Although the tradition may think that the two texts are closely related to each other, yet it cannot be denied that the *Śivasūtra* in itself does not belong to any particular school of thought. As the *Śivasūtra* is considered to be a revealed text, so it must belong to that corpus of Śaiva literature which is known as the Āgamaśāstra.[13] In contrast to the *Śivasūtra*, the *Spandakārikā* is not given the canonical status. Moreover, the text is the source of a specific school of thought, namely, the Spanda school.[14] As the initiator of the doctrine of Spanda, the *Spandakārikā*, therefore, must be viewed as containing new doctrinal development in terms of which it may be distinguished from the *Śivasūtra*. The over-all impression that one derives, upon reading the *Spandakārikā*, is that a specific doctrinal system is being established within a new metaphysical framework. Most of the technical terms of this text, like *vikāsa, svabhāva, unmeṣa, spanda*, etc., are totally absent from the *Śivasūtra*. The technical terms like radiance (*sphurattā*), wave (*urmī*), strength (*bala*) are, according to Kṣemarāja, to be found in such Tāntric texts that precede the *Śivasūtra*. All the above terms embody the spirit which the term *spanda* signifies.[15] There is another term, namely, *ghūrṇī* which is not to be found in the *Śivasūtra*. The term denotes the rolling of eyes in the state of inebriation. In the context of the Spanda doctrine it embodies ~~the~~ state of blissful enjoyment, which comes to be upon realizing the infinite nature of consciousness as being nothing else but vibration. It is this innate vibration that urges consciousness to pour out itself into what is called creation. While offering his eulogy to Śiva, this is what Utpala has to say concerning the inebriated state of consciousness:

> Making yourself radiantly manifest, You make all things unfold and contemplating (Your own) form. You contemplate the universe. As You pulsate blissfully (*ghūrṇase*), inebriating Yourself with the juice of aesthetic delight of Your nature (*nijarasa*), the phenomenal world emerges into manifestation.[16]

According to the Tantras, the taste or the flavour of the final spiritual state is linked to the state that occurs when one is completely drunk. As the Kuṇḍalinī, through the mystical centres in the body, rises upward, there occur a number of mystical experiences of which the state of drunknness is ultimate. The states that the yogī experiences during the period of ascension of the Kuṇḍalinī are said to be five, and they are delight (*ānanda*), a leap (*udbhava*), a tremor (*kampa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and pulsation (*ghūrṇī*).[17]

All the Śaivites of Kashmir think of the Tantras as being the final authoritative texts in matters spiritual. Since the Tantras as well as the *Spandakārikā* speak of the liberating experience as being of the nature of pulsation, it is therefore quite astonishing that no mention of this type of experience is made in the *Śivasūtra*. The *Śivasūtra* is not at all one with the *Spandakārikā* in defining Reality in terms of pulsation. Instead of *Spanda*, the text attempts to define Reality in terms of *ātman* or *caitanya*. These discrepancies between the two texts do not indicate that they have nothing in common. There are many metaphysical concepts which both the texts share in common. Both the texts are equally concerned with the first four psychological states, namely, waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), sleep (*nidrā*), and *suṣupti*.[18] Both the texts are of the opinion that the liberating experience is characterized by wonder (*camatkāra, vismaya*).[19] Both the texts also affirm that a *mantra* is to be considered as a mental activity, which means that a *mantra* has to be treated as belonging to the realm of the mind. Also both the texts analyze thoroughly the liberating and obscuring forces within, and on account of these forces mental or intuitive speech as a possibility is actualized. It is on account of speech, which is the innate nature of consciousness, that consciousness knows itself as well as that which it manifests, that is, the manifestables.[20] Both the texts maintain that the knowledge that emerges through mental representation is of inferior quality. It is a knowledge of limitations. In contrast to the representational knowledge, we have a knowledge that is liberating, and this form of knowledge emerges directly from consciousness itself. In the *Śivasūtra* particular attention is paid to these two forms of knowledge: representational knowledge and intuitive knowledge. A yogī who has direct, immediate and non-mediate knowledge becomes the Lord of the Wheel of Energies (*śakticakra*).[21] The Wheel of Energies are the powers innate to Śiva. It is through these powers that Śiva operates in the objective, subjective and cognitive realms. The bound individual experiences as being bound on account being unable to control these powers. Equally the *Spandakārikā* thinks of liberation as being equivalent to mastery over these powers (*cakreśvaratvasiddhi*). The mastery over these powers corresponds to the realization of being identical essentially with

Paramaśiva.[22]

From the above analysis we may safely conclude that the *Spandakārikā* represents a doctrinal developments in terms of which Reality is viewed as being characterized by the principle of vibration (*spanda*). The new doctrinal development resulted ultimately in the emergence of the Doctrine of Vibration School. All the commentators of the text support this view, and accordingly Rājānaka Rāma speaks of Spanda as an autonomous school of theology (*siddhānta*). Even Abhinava speaks of it in terms of *spanda* teaching (*spandaśāsana*).[23] Kṣemarāja, too, thinks of Spanda as an independent branch of knowledge (*śāstra*). Thus we may say that the *Spandakārikā* represents an attempt at developing a fresh metaphysical reflection concerning the nature of Reality. It does it without borrowing from other Śaiva traditions the necessary technical terms for expressing the nature of Reality. Further it may be said that the thinking that is contained in the *Spandakākrikā* has its source in the *Śivasūtra*. The new thinking has emerged in such a manner as would allow the *Spandakārikā* to lay down the foundation, without hurting or contradicting the over-all perspective of *Śivasūtra*, of an autonomous school of theology. And in this venture the *Spandakārikā* has been successful.

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2. See Rājānaka Rāma, *Spandavivṛti* (hereinafter cited as *Sp.vi.vṛ.*); Bhagvadutpala, *Sp.Pra.*
3. *Sp.Vi.Vṛ.*, p. 2; *Sp.Pra.* p.1; *Ś. Sū.Vā.*, p. 2.
4. *Sp.Pra.*, p. 2.
5. See Jean Naudou. *The Buddhists of Kashmir* (Delhi, 1980).
6. *Ś.Sū.Vi.*, pp. 4-5; *Sp.Nr.*, pp. 1-2.
7. The recension upon which Bhāskara has commented upon contains seventy-nine aphorisms, whereas the one upon which Kṣemarāja has commented consists of seventy-seven aphorisms. The variation exists on account of the division of one aphorism into two and the addition of an extra one, which is absent from the recension upon which Kṣemarāja has commented.
8. *Sp.Pra.*, p.1.
9. *Ś.Sū.Vi.*, p. 5; *Sp.Nr.*, pp. 1-2.
10. *ĪPVV*, vol. 2, p. 30.
11. See N. Rastogi, *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmirm*, vol. I (Delhi, 1979), p. 115.
12. Ibid., p. 1.
13. Jaideva Singh, Introduction to *Ś.Sū.Vi.*, p. 1.
14. N. Rastogi, op. cit., p. 116.
15. *Spandasandoha*, p. 5.

16. *Śivastotrāvalī*, 13.15.
17. See *Mālinīvijayatantra*, 11.25; cf. *Sp.Kā.*, 23-25.
18. *Ś.Sū.*, 1.17; *Sp.Kā.*, 45-48.
19. *Ś.Sū.*, 1.12; *Sp.Kā.*, 26-27.
20. Ibid., 1.3; 2.7; 3.20, 28.
21. Ibid., 1.22.
22. *Sp.Kā.*, 51.
23. *TĀ*, 3.281; 8.6; 23.40

APPENDIX C

A Note on the Spandakārikā

The text of the *Spandakārikā*, or the Stanzas on Vibration, is a short tract of fifty-two verses. The verses of the text do not simply deal with a particular theological topic; rather it attempts to synthesize the yogic praxis within the framework of Spanda doctrine which the text enunciates. The text is written in such a poetic style as if composed by a poet of *par excellence* merit. Keeping the poetic verve of the text in view, Bhagvadutpala speaks of the author of this text as a poet of great merit. If the text is treated as a poetic composition, then we will have to presume that it contains suggested meanings, which, at the level of interpretation, would mean that we would have to delve deep in order to unveil the suggested meaning of the verses. Prior to the composition of the text, there existed a tradition within the literary circles of Kashmir of writing small tracts on important theological topics. The purpose of composing short tracts seems to have been that such tracts could easily be learnt as well as memorized. The earliest example of such a text is that of the *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, which endeavours to explain the basic or fundamental philosophical principles of the classical Sāṁkhya philosophy in approximately seventy verses.

The earliest example of such a small tract in Kashmir is that of the *Ādhārakārikā*, or the *Stanzas of Sage Ādhāra*. The text mainly explained the basic principle of Vaiṣṇavism. Abhinavagupta, however, transformed the text into a monistic Śaiva tract, and at present is known by the name of the *Paramārthasāra*, or the *Essence of Ultimate Reality*. The other early example one could find are the two tracts of Sadyojyoti, and the tracts are the *Stanzas on Liberation (Mokṣakārikā)* and the *Stanzas on Worldly Experience (Bhogakārikā)*. In these two tracts Sadyojyoti gives an outline of the basic theological principles of the dualist Śaivasiddhānta school. The monistic Śaivas, too, have followed this tradition of composing small tracts on matters of theological importance. The best example one could offer is that of the *Stanzas on the Recognition of God (Īśvara-pratyabhijñā)* of Utpaladeva, which enunciates the basic doctrinal principles of the monistic Śaiva school. The text was composed approximately after one hundred years of the *Spandakārikā*. These two texts are of such great importance among the monistic Śaiva circles of Kashmir that various commentaries have been written on them. Also both the texts—*Spandakārikā* and *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*—have been responsible in giving rise to two philosophical schools of thought, which derive their respective names from the texts.

The reason that is given concerning the title of the *Spandakārikā* is the following. Kṣemarāja, one of the commentator of the text, tells us that the text is given the title of the *Spandakārikā* because it expounds as well as enunciates the doctrinal principle of vibration (*spanda*), which essentially is one's own nature (*svasvabhāva*). This vibratory nature also, at the same time, means that it is constitutive of Paramaśiva. Paramaśiva, as ultimate Reality, is the foundation of what we are, which means that our essential nature is non-different from that of Paramaśiva. Paramaśiva as consciousness is but the pulsating radiance (*sphurattā*) of consciousness itself. As Paramaśiva is nothing but consciousness, so the pulsating radiance of consciousness is but its energy (*spanda-śakti*).[1] Rājānaka Rāma offers a similar argument when he says that the text is given this title because it expounds the basic principles of *spanda* or vibration. Vibration, according to him, is a subtle stir as well as supreme power of consciousness, which is but the essential nature of one's own-being (*svasvabhāva*). Accordingly this stir and the supreme power are termed as the actual attributes (*dharma*) of Paramaśiva.[2]

There is a real confusion among the traditional commentators as well as among the modern scholars concerning the actual authorship of the *Spandakārikā*. There are some scholars who attribute the authorship of the text to Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, and the modern scholars who adhere to this viewpoint are J.C. Chatterjee,[3] R.K. Kaw,[4] and B.N. Pandit.[5] There are, on the other hand, scholars like K.C. Pandey,[6] R. Gnoli[7] who hold the opposite view by affirming Vasugupta to be the author of the text. Whoever be the real author of the text, the fact remains that a new theological school of thought was born with the composition of the *Spandakārikā*.

The text of the *Spandakārikā* holds a unique place in the history of Trika Śaivism of Kashmir. This is evidenced by the fact that a number of commentaries have been written on this text. The earliest commentary, namely, the *Spandasarvasva* or the *Essence of Spanda*, is that of Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa. This commentary of Kallaṭa is commonly known by the name of *Vṛtti*, indicating thereby that the commentary is meant to be a brief gloss so that the meaning of the text may be made more explicit without any elaboration. Even though the commentary may be brief, yet it is written in a style that is discursive, and so may be seen as a basic tool for understanding the fundamental doctrinal principles of Spanda.

Even though the Trika authors speak of Kallaṭa with awe and reverence, yet we do not know much about his personal life. What we know definitely about him is that he adorned the court of Avantivarman (AD 855-83). Kalhaṇa speaks of him as an accomplished yogī (*siddha*).[8] Further we know from his title—*bhaṭṭa*—that he was a Brahmin by birth. As a man of learning, he took deep interest in different branches of knowledge. He had, apart from Vasugupta, various other teachers who taught him poetics and literary criticism. Accordingly Bhagvadutpala speaks of him as a poet of great merit.[9]

Unlike Vasugupta, Kallaṭa led a life of a householder. He had a son by the name of Mukula. Mukula was a great authority on poetics. Some of the works that he wrote on poetics are the *Alaṁkārodāharaṇa*, *Virahatattvānusmaraṇa*, and the *Abhidhāvṛttimātṛkā*. Bhaṭṭendurāja, the teacher of Abhinavagupta in poetics, learned the basics of poetry from Mukula. Thus we have a direct line of teachers in poetics from Kallaṭa to Abhinavagupta via Mukula and Bhaṭṭendurāja.

As to whether Kallaṭa wrote the text of the *Spandakārikā* is a question that has remained so far unsolved. He, however, wrote a commentary, called *Vṛtti*, on this text. Two of his other works, which are supposed to have been his commentaries on the *Śivasūtra*, are the *Madhuvāhinī* and the *Tattvārthacintāmaṇi*. The other works he is said to have composed are the *Tattvavicāra* and the *Svasvabhāvasaṁbodha*.

Next in line of commentators on the *Spandakārikā* is Rājānaka Rāma, and the commentary he wrote is called the *Vivṛti*, or the *Extensive Explanation*. Rājānaka Rāma is known by various names. Mostly he is known as Rāmakaṇṭha. Also he is known by such names as Śrīrāma, Rājānaka Rāma, or Rājānaka Rāmakaṇṭha. As there are two other Rāmakaṇṭhas, who were Śaivasiddhāntins, so we shall, in order to avoid misidentification and confusion, call our author simply as Rājānaka Rāma. Rājānaka Rāma was a direct disciple of Utapaladeva, and so he must have been a contemporary of Lakṣmaṇagupta. As Lakṣmaṇagupta was the disciple of Utpaladeva and the teacher of Abhinavagupta, so Rājānaka must have lived during the first half of tenth century.

Very little is known about the life of Rājānaka Rāma. If he is the very person who wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, called *Sarvatobhadra*, then from one of the concluding verses of this commentary we know that he was a Kashmiri Brahmin belonging to the lineage (*gotra*) of Kaṇṭha Dhaumyayana.[10] Also Rājānaka Rāma tells us that he had a brother by the name of Muktakaṇa. Some scholars have identified him with the great poet Muktakaṇa. Even Kalhaṇa speaks of Muktakaṇa as a poet of great excellence.[11] Whether the poet Muktakaṇa is identical with the brother of Rājānaka Rāma is a question that needs to be explored. Whatever be the case, what is of importance is that Rājānaka Rāma came from a talented family of scholars.

As the *Vṛtti* of Kallaṭa on the *Spandakārikā* was in need of an extensive commentary, so Rājānaka Rāma took up the task of writing a detailed commentary. Unlike Kṣemarāja, he has divided his commentary into four sections. The first section, called Vyatirekopapattinirdeśa, consists of sixteen verses. The attempt of the author, while commenting on the first section, is to establish through sound argument and reasoning the existence of the Universal Self, which, as the ground of our existence, is seen to be independent both of the body and of the mind. The self-evident existence of the Self is arrived at through the process of intuitive awareness. The second section, which is called Vyatirekasvabhāvopalabdhi, consists of eleven verses (17-27). While commenting on this section, the author attempts to point out as to how and in what manner the Self is the ground of all existents that are constitutive of phenomenality. Also it is pointed out that the Self, being eternal and self-abiding, can be known only through direct perception (*upalabdhi*). The third section, known as the Viśvasvabhāvaśaktyupapatti, consists of just three verses (28-30). While the first two sections deal with the transcendent aspect of Paramaśiva, the third section concerns itself with the immanent aspect of Reality. The immanent aspect of Paramaśiva manifests itself through the circle of powers (*śakticakra*), which are seen to constitute the diversity of phenomena. As the circle of powers of Śiva constitute the diversity of the world, so the world of diversity is seen to be nothing else but the self-manifestation or emission of Śiva, which, within the non-dualistic frame of reference, means that there is no essential difference between Śiva and the world. Insofar as the fourth section is concerned, it consists of twenty-one verses (31-51), and is called the Abhedopalabdhi. In this section Rājānaka Rāma attempts to show as to how a yogī realizes his essential identity with Śiva, which at the same time denotes the attainment of the state of liberation from bondage. Also in this section are discussed the conditions that cause bondage to be as well as the supernatural powers that a yogī attains while passing through various states of consciousness.

The third important commentator on the *Spandakārikā* is Bhagvadutpala. He, however, must not be confused with the author of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*. Our commentator is known as Utpala Vaiṣṇava on account of him originally being a Vaiṣṇavite.[12] As a Vaiṣṇava, he has referred to many Vaiṣṇava works in his commentary, namely, the *Pradīpikā*. Although a Vaiṣṇava, he seems to have been influenced by the Spanda school of thought, and it is quite visible in his commentary on the *Spandakārikā*. Utpala Vaiṣṇava came from a Brahmin family, and his father, Trivikrama, resided at Nārāyaṇasthāna. He also speaks of his maternal great-grandfather as being Mahābala.[13] Mahābala is believed to have a written work called the *Rahasyastotra*.

As we are not certain as to when Bhagvadutpala lived, so we have to conjecture concerning his time. There is a view which tells that Lakṣmaṇadeśikendra, the author of the *Śāradātilaka*, is none other than the son of Utpala,[14] who taught the Pratyabhijñā philosophy to Abhinavagupta. Lakṣmaṇadeśikendra tells us that he is third in the line of Mahābala. From the remarks of Lakṣmaṇadeśikendra Rastogī concludes that this Mahābala is none other than the maternal great-grandfather of Bhagvadutpala.[15] If this be the case, then we have the following line of teachers: Mahābala, Ācāryapaṇḍita, Trivikrama, Bhagvadutpala, Lakṣmaṇadeśikendra, Lakṣmaṇagupta, and Abhinavagupta.

If the above view is correct, then it would mean that Bhagvadutpala must precede Abhinavagupta by the least one generation, which means that he must have lived by the second quarter of the tenth century.[16] This view is further confirmed if the following facts are taken into consideration. What we can say with certainty is this: Bhagvadutpala must have either been a contemporary or lived after Utpaladeva of the Pratyabhijñā school. This view is based upon the assumption that Bhagvadutpala has quoted from the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*.[17] If this be the case, then Bhagvadutpala must have lived one generation before Abhinavagupta, which means that he must have lived during the middle of the tenth century.

The other great commentary on the *Spandakārikā* is that of Kṣemarāja. Kṣemarāja was not only an outstanding student of Abhinavagupta, but was also an outstanding writer and thinker. It is difficult to establish whether the commentator of the *Spandakārikā* is the same Kṣemarāja of whom Abhinavagupta speaks of as his cousin and student. If the author of the commentary on the *Spandakārikā* is accepted to be the cousin of Abhinavagupta, then his father must have been Vāmadeva, who was the uncle of Abhinava. As a contemporary of Abhinava, Kṣemarāja must have lived during the last quarter of tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century. Apart from Abhinava, Kṣemarāja studied under the direction of many teachers, and one of them is said to be Prayāga.[18] Kṣemarāja, too, seems to have been influenced by the Spanda thinking, and this is evidenced by his commentaries on the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā*.

Apart from the above commentaries, there seem to have been other commentaries too on the *Spandakārikā*, which, according to Kṣemarāja, were neither good nor consistent with the tradition. These defective commentaries, which are now no more extant, compelled Kṣemarāja to write one of his own, so that confusion may no more prevail.

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8. Kalhaṇa, *RT*, 5.66: "In the time of Avantivarman the illustrious Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa and other holy men (*siddhas*) descended to the earth for the benefit of people."
9. *Sp.Pra.*, p. 13.
10. Rājānaka Rāma, *Sarvatobhadra*, p. 10.
11. *RT*, 5.34.
12. *Sp. Pra.*, p. 7.
13. Ibid., p. 13.
14. *Śāradātilaka*, 25.83-86.
15. N. Rastogi, *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir*, vol. I, p. 130.
16. Ibid., p. 152.
17. K.C. Pandey, op. cit., p. 152.
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Moti Lal Pandit, being a Kashmiri Pandit, had the opportunity of studying the philosophical and Tāntric traditions of Trika from various teachers both in and outside the Valley. Trained as a theologian and in modern humanities and classical languages, he has accordingly been the communicator of today's Hinduism and Buddhism when they encounter the modern world. His many books include: *Towards Transcendence; Being as Becoming; Transcendence and Negation: A Study of Buddhist Compassion and Christian Love; Beyond the Word; Śūnyatā, The Essence of Mahāyāna Spirituality; In Search of the Absolute;* and *The Hidden Way: A Study in Modern Religious Esoterism.*

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Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi
Website: www.mrmlbooks.com

ISBN 81-215-1082-1
9 788121 510820

Rs 550